

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY
AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE

Peter D Sorenson

Master of Arts

2005

RMIT University

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY
AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Peter D Sorenson
Diploma of Art, Graduate Diploma of Education

School of Applied Communication
Design and Social Context Portfolio
RMIT University
March 2005

DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter D Sorenson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter D Sorenson
31 March 2005



‘I’ve never told any one except my wife until this point. It was like an immediate obsession at the point at which I took the photo of my first barbershop. What are these places, Barber Shops? Relics of the past...many of which are closed, like memories just hanging around and nothing gets done...They just sit empty, full of lost memories. I wonder, “What happened?”’ — Sam

‘I’m stunned at the cataclysmic effect of such a mundane, banal, simplistic question. I’ve thought of little [else] since.’ — Robert

C O N T E N T S

TABLE OF FIGURES	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction to the study	1
Organisation of the document	1
The research problem	2
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	3
Psyche, wellbeing and the Australian mid-life male	4
Psyche and wellbeing	4
The challenge for contemporary mid-life males	5
The transcendent function	7
The transformational role of images and art in the development of the mid-life male psyche	8
Images in dreams and fantasy	8
Archetypes in dreams and fantasy	9
Self, other and art	11
Art and inner life	12
Artist as audience	13
Self and other—Transitional phenomena and aesthetic experience	13
Art therapy and self-enquiry	15
Summary	16
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	18
Qualitative research method	18
Collective case study	18
Interview methodology	19
Participant self-inquiry	20
Ethical considerations	21
Scope of analysis and interpretation	21
Research questions	22
Summary	22
CHAPTER 4 DESIGN	24
Research procedure	24
Selection of participants	24
Briefing of participants	24
Types of empirical data, collection and presentation	25
Personal background and role of the primary researcher	26
CHAPTER 5 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS	27
Demographic and other background information	27
Sam	29
Background	30
Photographs, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion	30
Harry	44
Background	44
Paintings, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion	44
Jon	53
Background	54
Drawings, reflections, interview, visual diary excerpts and discussion	54
David	72
Background	72
Drawings, paintings, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion	72
Robert	85
Background	86
Drawings, visual diary, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion	86
Synthesis	100
CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	103
Summary	103
Limitations	104
Implications	104
Recommendations for further research	105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1, Japanese Barber, Tokyo	29
Figure 2, Japanese Barber, Tokyo	31
Figure 3, Continental Hairdresser, Melbourne	33
Figure 4, Vittorio Barber, Melbourne	34
Figure 5, Continental hairstyles, Melbourne	35
Figure 6, Barbieri, Italy	37
Figure 7, Barbieri, Italy	39
Figure 8, Barbieri, Italy	41
Figure 9, Barbieri, Italy	43
Figure 10, Belongingness (in progress)	45
Figure 11, Belongingness	49
Figure 12, Untitled	53
Figure 13, Untitled	55
Figure 14, Untitled	57
Figure 15, Untitled	59
Figure 16, Untitled	61
Figure 17, Untitled	63
Figure 18, Untitled	64
Figure 19, Untitled	65
Figure 20, Untitled	67
Figure 21, Untitled	69
Figure 22, Untitled	71
Figure 23, Mandala	73
Figure 24, Sea of Rainbows, drawing	77
Figure 25, Sea of Rainbows, painting	79
Figure 26, Sea of Rainbows II, drawing	81
Figure 27, Sea of Rainbows II, painting	83
Figure 28, Après le Déluge	85
Figure 29, Visual diary, pages 46-47	89
Figure 30, Enfance	93
Figure 31, Conte	95
Figure 32, Parade	97

A B S T R A C T

This research project investigates images from the contemporary Australian mid-life psyche, exploring the contribution to individual transformation made through the creation of, and reflective engagement with, personal imagery. Asking the question: 'What do contemporary Australian mid-life males consider to be a rich and sustaining inner life?' This project documents the visual images, descriptions, and reflections of a group of five participants, discussing the individuals' experiences of aesthetic self-inquiry with reference to divergent theories of psychology, art therapy and philosophy of aesthetics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all participants, my co-researchers, for making this project possible, for sharing your hearts and minds—your rich inner lives. Heartfelt thanks to those who helped me find the ‘on’ switch on my torchlight—John Byrne, Mary Scarfe, Lois Ann, Andy Bullen, and others who have supported, encouraged and inspired me—Les Walkling, Ian Lobb, Brian Rock, John Jones, Jill Powell, Paul Gaskin, Lauren Murray and Dr Linda Brennan. I am also indebted, naturally, to those writers and artists from whom many insights, ideas and references are drawn.

Thank you to Dr Linda Brennan and Sophie Alexiadis for editing of the text.

Finally and specially to Amanda, my wonderful daughters, and other family and friends, thank you for your love and support.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The worst of it all is that intelligent and cultivated people live their lives without even knowing of the possibility of such transformations. Wholly unprepared we embark upon the second half of life. Or are there perhaps colleges for forty-year-olds which prepare them for their coming life and its demands as the ordinary college introduces our young people to knowledge of the world?

No, thoroughly unprepared we take the step into the afternoon of life; worse still, we take this step with the false assumption that our truths and ideals will serve us as hitherto.

(Jung, 1969, pp. 398-399)

Introduction to the study

This research project engages with the drive within men at mid-life for individual transformation and growth, and the role of personal images and art in this process of psychological integration. This inquiry was motivated by a personal desire, and the search by other men, to be deeply masculine—capable of intimacy and vulnerability as well as being vital, decisive, confident and strong—while simultaneously grappling with the malaise, inner disturbances and sense of isolation that frequently obtrude during male mid-life.

Inspired by this struggle to find fulfilment, this inquiry seeks some answers to the question: ‘What is a rich and sustaining inner life?’ A consequent question: ‘How can a rich, sustaining inner life be developed?’ may be addressed from many perspectives. However, in order to specify and focus this research, the inquiry was guided by my own experience and interest in the relationship of personal images and art to the process of psychological development.

This study explores images from the contemporary Australian mid-life male psyche by examining the experiences of myself and other men (none of whom are consistently practising artists) prompted to embark into this domain—eliciting and documenting visual images, descriptions of images such as dreams and fantasies, reflections, feelings and opinions from a small number of mid-life Australian males—in order to investigate the contribution of creating and engaging reflectively with personal images to the development of a rich, sustaining inner life and sense of wellbeing.

My hope is that a modest contribution may be made to the male encounter of mid-life, particularly concerning the transformational effects of uncovering, exploring, reflecting upon, articulating and sharing male experiences in relation to their images from the psyche.

Organisation of the document

This document forms the presentation of a variety of empirical material—including participants’ artwork and reflections—integrated with a thesis component comprising a literature

review, research methodology and design, and the analysis, synthesis and summary of this investigation into images from the contemporary Australian mid-life psyche.

This research project is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One the reader is introduced to the subject matter, the context of the research project and a statement of the research problem.

In Chapter Two a literature review locates the inquiry within a theoretical context, tracing some concepts of psychological development and wellbeing, including issues of mid-life in the contemporary context. References are made to some historical relationships between art, psychology and the philosophy of aesthetics, including the role of personal images, approaches of art therapy and visual journaling which inform this inquiry into development of the male psyche.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology, elaborating on the collective case study approach taken, defines the scope of analysis and interpretation of the data, and puts the research questions. Issues related to the involvement of myself as primary researcher and participant are also addressed. Participants in this study are considered as co-researchers.

Chapter Four describes the design of the research project—the processes and methods used to locate and select co-researchers, collect, investigate and present the data, and contingencies associated with ethical issues.

Chapter Five presents key aspects of the individual data, raises and discusses issues and outcomes at an individually described and constructed level, including relevant immiscible data, and presents some naturalistic and propositional generalisations.

Chapter Six summarises the inquiry, discusses the contribution and implications of the project, raises limitations of the findings, and concludes with potential future directions for research.

The research problem

In the context of empirical evidence that suggests many Australian mid-life males silently struggle with a sense of disconnection from self and others (while not presuming that participants are, by definition, experiencing such disconnection), the purpose of this research is to explore what a small sample of contemporary Australian mid-life men consider to be a rich and sustaining inner life. Furthermore, the aim of this investigation is to better understand whether creating imagery, or art, as a form of expression of the heart and mind, and reflecting upon this process and the created work can contribute to this inner life, transformation and wellbeing.

In describing the participants of this study, the term ‘artist’, unless stated otherwise, refers not to any already consistently practising artist, but to individual mid-life men prompted on impulse to engage in this domain of expression and reflection.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

*Within all of us is a silent language that reveals the truth of our thoughts, feelings and emotions
far more fluently than words. That language is imagery.*

(Ganim & Fox, 1999, p. 3)

*The aesthetic domain answers basic needs intrinsic to self-consciousness itself,
and art is the highest realization of such needs.*

(Crowther, 1993, book jacket)

To position this project within a framework, historical and contemporary references are presented in order to demonstrate connections between personal imagery and art, wellbeing of the psyche, and male mid-life. The predominant focus is on psychological sources, with reference also to the philosophy of aesthetics in relation to the role of art. The intention, within the size and scope of this research project is, however, by no means to provide an exhaustive or in-depth representation of alternative views available.

Derived from the Greek words *psyche*,¹ meaning breath, soul or spirit, and *logis*, meaning speech, word or reason, psychology literally means the language or reason of the soul or spirit. Psychology deals with our thoughts, emotions, memories, dreams and imagination, including that which may be hidden. Psychoanalytic theory and practice, almost from their origins as a means for treating disorders of the mind, have also been used as a way of comprehending aspects of art and imagery. Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, placed great significance on imagery in fantasy, dreams and art in relation to mental health. Divergent theorists, including Jung and proponents of object-relations theory and ego psychology also ascribe an important relationship to art and psychological development. Ellen Spitz (1985), in *Art & Psyche*, points out that, broadly, the great contribution of psychoanalysis is that it ‘offers both a highly refined map of the mind and a method for investigating its functioning’, dealing with multiple issues including the ‘conflicting forces of expression and repression...[and] developmental stages for the origin and maturation of psychic structures and dynamics’ (p. 11). Psychoanalytic theory also informs the practice and

1. In Greek mythology *Psyche* was a personification of the soul, but she did not start out as such. On a deeper allegorical level, *Psyche* was the embodiment of the triumphant emergence of the soul after its journey through the dark trials of the world. She was represented, after her apotheosis, as winged. Her symbol was a butterfly, itself an example of a glorious metamorphosis’ (Bell, 1991, p. 387).

Jung provides the etymological connections for *psyche*, and *soul*—Latin, Greek and Arabic meanings are variations to the ‘notion of moving air, the “cold breath of the spirits”—wind, to breathe out, to pant. *Soul* comes from Gothic and old German words connected with the Greek word *aiolos*, which means *quick-moving, twinkling, iridescent*. The Greek word *psyche* also means *butterfly*. Old Slavonic *sila* means *strength*. ‘These connections throw light on the original meaning of the word *soul*: it is moving force, that is, life-force. Another primitive view [is that] the soul is a fire or flame, because warmth is likewise a sign of life’ (Jung, 1969, p. 345).

theory of much art therapy and visual journaling, methods that explicitly link personal imagery to wellbeing and wholeness, and which will be elaborated upon later.

To ascertain some notion of what might be considered a rich, sustaining inner life, particularly in the context of men desiring growth and grappling with inner disturbances that often manifest during mid-life, references to concepts of psychological conflict, development and wellbeing are made. Specific mention is made of the need for psychological growth in the mid-life Australian context. That growth and achieving one's full potential, and the significant role of art in this urge towards self-actualisation, is also supported by references to the philosophy of aesthetics.

Drawing on early pathological psychoanalytical theories, as well as more recent strength-based perspectives, issues of inner conflict and wellbeing will be discussed to explore the correlation between psychological growth and personal imagery (such as occur in dreams and fantasies) and art: in the encounter of the artist with his creative work; insofar as it informs the experience of the artist as his own audience or critic; and—in order to set a context for both the participants' reflections and approaches to explaining images—as it relates to interpretation of images (see Spitz, 1985, p. ix). Approaches to psychological wellbeing are explored in which personal imagery and reflection are both intrinsic and explicit, such as art therapy and visual journaling.

Psyche, wellbeing and the Australian mid-life male

Psyche and wellbeing

Seeking, over a hundred years ago, to cure conditions such as neurosis and hysteria, Sigmund Freud, both a philosopher and medical doctor, became fascinated with understanding and mapping the influence of the mind on the body, founding the field of psychoanalysis. He postulated that in addition to the conscious mind, the psyche includes the dynamic unconscious, that part of the mind which is inaccessible to the conscious mind by direct thought (Klages, 2001).

Freud maintained that in civilisation, two basic principles apply: 'pleasure', that is, doing what feels good; and 'reality', the need to live and work in the world. An orthodox view² of what has been termed 'this rather murky but central psychoanalytic notion' (Spitz, 1985, p. 47), suggests that Freud believed that, starting in early infancy, we are subject to instinctual sexual or aggressive wishes, and that in order to live cooperatively and be productive in the world we need to comply with reality, to sublimate or neutralise these pleasurable desires that cannot be fulfilled. These unfulfilled wishes, he argued, do not just vanish but are repressed into the unconscious, becoming a potential source of inner conflict (Spitz, 1985).

What relevance do Freud's ideas of the unconscious and inner conflict hold for contemporary Australian males at mid-life? The theories of Freud and successive psychologists pertain clearly

2. Some authors, including Bettelheim and Leader, suggest that in orthodox psychoanalysis, key aspects of Freudian theory have been mistranslated and at times misunderstood, including, for example, the structure of the conscious (Bettelheim, 1983) and sublimation (Leader, 2000).

to wellbeing and the psyche, and often make specific reference to the significance of images in transformation.

The challenge for contemporary mid-life males

A major challenge facing Australian men today is to find greater meaning and satisfaction in life. Psychologist, Steve Biddulph (1994), states that ‘Men’s difficulty is often one of isolation from self and the world, resulting in emotional immaturity and loneliness’ (p. 4), and suggests that to obtain greater self-fulfilment and empowerment Australian men need to develop ‘a rich and sustaining inner life’ (p. 7). He adds that men need to resolve issues with their father, that we need to develop enriching pastimes and to grow emotionally and spiritually in order to create effective relationships with our partners and children, colleagues and friends (1994). Implied by the title of a recent monograph, *Living as Men: “It’s like being in a washing machine”: Masculinities in contemporary urban Australia* (Lambevski et al., 2001) is the turmoil encountered by men, and numerous challenges to men are also outlined in the discussion paper, *The health and well being of men in South Australia* (Department of Human Services, 2000).

So how do men resolve what Allis (1990), in *What Do Men Really Want?* calls ‘the cognitive dissonance between the desire for change and the absence of ways to achieve it’ (p. 81)? How do men obtain a rich and sustaining inner life? The answer to the first question is paradoxical, because the solution is not simply a matter of intellectual clarification. However, this research endeavours to identify a possible way to achieve change.

Biddulph³ has popularised and made more accessible the ideas of other proponents of the Men’s Movement⁴ (Bly, 1993; Kipnis, 1991) and psychoanalysis in relation to wellbeing. In *Knights Without Armor*, Kipnis wrote that:

Men frequently feel disconnected from an authentic spiritual source of aliveness within us. When we lose our soul, we no longer feel fully able or completely connected to life itself. So the work at hand for all of us became rediscovering our souls, plumbing the depths of feelings, reclaiming our capacity for joy or pleasure, reawakening our creativity, and finding peace of mind (Kipnis, 1991, p. 17).

This need for peace of mind and self-fulfilment is often particularly important for men at mid-life (approximately 35-45 years of age⁵). Indeed, Biddulph’s comments about isolation are just as true ten years later. Based on the findings of a recent survey of 13,000 people nationally,⁶ Farah Farouque states that:

3. See Biddulph’s book, *Manhood: A Book about Setting Men Free*, published under the title, *The Secret Life of Men*, in the USA. See also Manhood website: <http://www.manhood.com.au>, to which Biddulph contributes.

4. The *Mythopoetic* or *Expressive Men’s Movement*, as distinct from *Feminist*, men’s rights and other recent men’s movements, maintains that in the past men have experienced incomplete, flawed images of masculinity such as the ‘macho’ male and the ‘too soft’ Sensitive New Age Guy, and argues that men need to discover and integrate life-giving, mature images—hidden in our ‘nourishing dark’—to enable grief, healing and inner strength (Allis, 1990; Bly, 1993; 1996; Small, 1996).

5. While defined approximately by age, mid-life is a stage which can extend into the fifties (Morton, 2002).

6. The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey.

Loneliness in Australia has a masculine face. Men tend to experience the condition far more intensely than women, right through from early adulthood to old age, a study suggests. This gender gap peaks when males hit mid-life. From 35 to 44 they feel the most isolated from friends and other supports, especially if they live alone. These feelings persist right up to their 70s (Farouque, 2005).

Carl Jung, over seventy years ago, elaborated on the phenomenon of impending changes in the psyche during early mid-life, observable as indirect signs or, depending upon the individual, more obvious obtrusions:

Many—far too many—aspects of life which should also have been experienced lie in the lumber-room among dusty memories; but sometimes, too, they are glowing coals under grey ashes (Jung, 1969, p. 395).

Apart from patients with neurosis, and on the subject of more subtle indications of mid-life changes, Jung observed that:

Often, however, we find cases in which there is no tangible mood or depression at all, but just a general, dull discontent, a feeling of resistance to everything, a sort of boredom or vague disgust, and indefinable but excruciating emptiness (Jung, 1969, p. 83).

Described as the third clearly identifiable stage in the process of a man's psychological development, 'mid-life' is when unresolved issues—intrusions from the previous Oedipal and adolescent stages⁷—are experienced and struggled with cumulatively (O'Connor, 1993). Dr Peter O'Connor (1993), a psychoanalyst working with Australian men, states that behind the phenomenon of mid-life 'is the Jungian idea of the urge or instinct towards wholeness...termed individuation' (p. 47) or self-realisation—the process of psychological growth by which a man becomes the distinct individual he is (Jung, 1966).

Like Freud, Jung (1969) articulated a number of reasons for psychological and emotional dissonance. He argued that the unconscious, similar to Freud's *id*,⁸ displays compensatory or complementary tendencies towards the conscious.⁹ He maintained that a tension in the equilibrium between these opposites is a precondition of psychological development, and that ignoring the unconscious part of the psyche which contains forgotten, inhibited, inherited, and fantasy material below the threshold of awareness, dooms consciousness to 'stagnation, congestion, and ossification' (1966, pp. 53-54). Indeed, Jung stated that 'Failure to adapt to this inner world is a negligence entailing just as serious consequences as ignorance and ineptitude in the outer world'

7. Occurring at 5-6 years of age, this phase is named after *Oedipus*, the hero of the ancient Greek myth. Metaphorically, the story is about perceiving 'separateness from the mother—and the struggle to tolerate the union of opposites, as personified in the primal figures of mother and father'; about separation and 'then the union of opposites, masculine and feminine, in the psyche of an individual' (O'Connor, 1993, pp. 16-18). The word *adolescence* is derived from Latin roots meaning *nourish* and *grow up*. Crucial to this stage for a boy are the tasks of separating, particularly from his mother, and creating his own identity (O'Connor, 1993).

8. The part of the psyche that is unconscious and the source of primitive instinctive drives, Freud called the *id* (WordNet 2.0, 2003).

9. Consciousness and memory, involving control and conforming to reality, Freud called the *ego* (WordNet 2.0, 2003).

(1966, p. 204). He also noted that modern Western society has created a culture in which the significance of the unconscious is commonly disregarded:

Civilized life today demands concentrated, directed conscious functioning, and this entails the risk of a considerable dissociation from the unconscious. The further we are able to remove ourselves from the unconscious through directed functioning, the more readily a powerful counter-position can build up in the unconscious, and when this breaks out it may have disagreeable consequences (Jung, 1969, p. 71).

In more contemporary terms, as Biddulph (1994) aptly puts it, ‘Men’s enemies are often on the inside—in the walls we put up around our own hearts’ (p. 4).

So far, then, a connection has been established between contemporary Australian mid-life males and the need or inner drive for psychological integration—the assimilation of unconscious content—at the least to reduce potential inner disturbances and keep the psyche in equilibrium. What then, is a process by which men can achieve such assimilation?

The transcendent function

Jung (1969) was quite clear that to be healthy, ‘man needs difficulties’ (p. 73). As with Freud, his aim as a therapist was to reduce the number of those difficulties, particularly those that were the result of a disassociated unconscious, such as prejudiced projections¹⁰ and inner conflict.

Jung’s solution to such dissociation was to bring unconscious material such as forgotten, repressed, or fantasy content to the individual’s awareness and understanding. Jung (1969) called this process the *transcendent function*, suggesting that it was ‘organic’ (p. 73) because rather than ignoring or censoring unconscious material, its importance was acknowledged, therefore restoring balance in the tension between unconscious and conscious. Thus, through gradual recognition of and insight into his unconscious content a patient may become capable of comprehending and interpreting his own behaviour, thereby achieving a ‘transition from one attitude to another organically’ (1969, p. 73). Addressing the unconscious in a therapeutic setting can, therefore, serve to lay the foundations for a person’s change in outlook.

In light of this psychoanalytical theory, some questions are raised in relation to this study. First, can individuals, specifically mid-life males, ‘organically’ achieve insight, transition, or transformation through the use of the transcendent function without the mediation of a therapist? And second, how might images from the psyche, and reflection upon these, relate to this process? These questions will be dealt with shortly.

10. Projection is ‘the unconscious ascription of a personal thought, feeling, or impulse to somebody else, especially a thought or feeling considered undesirable’ (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999).

The transformational role of images and art in the development of the mid-life male psyche

Clear historic links between images (including those evoked by dreams and fantasies), art and psychology have existed since the early 20th century. From the early 19th century, the *Romantic or expressive critical tradition*¹¹ in the arts had shifted the ‘focus of critical attention dramatically from audience or work of art to the psyche of the artist who created it...centering on the way an artist’s inner life of feeling finds expression in his works’ (Spitz, 1985, pp. 26-27). Indeed, both Freud and Jung were influenced by German Romantic literature (Edwards, 1989).

So it was within this climate that the evolution of psychoanalytic theory and practice began with Freud’s investigation of the unconscious, including extensive interest in imagery in dreams, fantasy and art (Freud, 1964; Freud & Strachey, 1971; Jung, 1969, 1972). Recent literature and practice show this connection is as relevant today for mid-life men (Johnson, 1986; O’Connor, 1993; Ganim & Fox, 1999).

Images in dreams and fantasy

Although interpreted differently according to various psychoanalytic approaches, dreams provide a rich source of imagery. Freud maintained that repressed content could be accessed through dreams, which he claimed provided a ‘wish-release’ purpose. He believed that latent deep meaning in the form of symbolic images and thoughts could be interpreted. This, then, provided an important source of self-understanding in the therapeutic process (Freud & Strachey, 1971). Freud noted that patients who had difficulty verbalising their dreams could often draw them (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 24). He believed that dreams and fantasies were a childish escape from reality, that ‘works of art are sublimation of infantile conflicts’ (Storr, 1989, p. xi).

Alternative views and theories to those of Freud soon developed. For instance, Freud’s contemporaries, Jung, and the philosopher Wittgenstein, suggested that Freud attributed to dreams far too much sexual and aggressive meaning (Flanagan, 2000, pp. 42-44). Jung agreed that dreams were a source of deep inner meaning, but while Freud believed that dreams were the sleeping equivalent of waking psychic¹² symptoms, effectively ‘protect[ing] the socialized conscious from too direct an encounter with the unconscious’ (Conigliaro, 1977, p. ix), Jung proposed that dreams may to a degree be compensatory. Thus, according to Jung (1969), dream contents of ‘vital significance for conscious orientation’ would be ‘so intense that they are able to counteract sleep’ (pp. 251-252), and that despite the contents being symbolic, their purpose is to elucidate something as yet either unknown, or only partly understood (1966). Other views exist, such as Adler’s idea that dreams reveal levels of self-esteem, and the view of evolutionary

11. For an explanation of Romanticism see Edwards, M. (1989), pp. 74-75. Art, therapy, and Romanticism, in A. Gilroy & T. Dalley (Eds.), *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy*, London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge.

12. Psychic, in the sense of pertaining to the human mind.

‘theory of mind’ proponents, such as Flanagan (2000), which runs contrary to psychoanalysts’ assumptions that deep meaning is intrinsic to all dreams. However, consensus is achieved with regard to the view that *some* dreams may reveal our inner content in frequently unfettered shape, and that they are self-expressive and valuable in the process of apprehending and enhancing self-knowledge (Flanagan, 2000, p. 195).

Dreams and their imagery, then, play a significant role in the transformative process for both Freud and Jung. Another valuable source of imagery is creative fantasy. According to Jung (1966), in fantasy ‘all the functions in the psyche converge’ (p. 290), permeating and connecting both conscious and unconscious. In contrast to Freud, Jung encouraged patients to use fantasy, or creative imagination, positively in the hope that they might discover hidden aspects of their unconscious. In fact, ‘to make visible, to reveal’ (Johnson, 1986, p. 23), is the meaning of the Greek word *phantasia*, from which the word fantasy is derived. In his book, *Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth*, Robert Johnson asserts that:

We find in the psychology of the Greeks a fundamental insight that modern depth psychology has had to rediscover: The human mind is invested with a special power to convert the invisible realm into visible forms so that it can be seen in the mind and contemplated. We call this invisible realm the unconscious: For Plato it was the world of ideal forms; other ancients thought of it as the sphere of the gods, the region of pure spirit. But all sensed one thing: Only our power to make images enables us to see it. For the Greeks, *phantasia* denoted this special faculty in the mind for producing poetic, abstract, and religious imagery (Johnson, 1986, p. 23).

Indeed, by giving an image, a mood, or a feeling visible shape, an aesthetic artefact can be formed which may then be directly addressed by both the unconscious and the conscious. Jung states:

It does not suffice in all cases to elucidate only the conceptual context of a dream-content. Often it is necessary to clarify a vague content by giving it a visible form. This can be done by drawing, painting or modelling. Often the hands know how to solve a riddle with which the intellect has wrestled in vain. By shaping it, one goes on dreaming the dream in greater detail in the waking state, and the initially incomprehensible, isolated event is integrated into the sphere of the total personality, even though it remains at first unconscious to the subject (Jung, 1969, pp. 86-87).

A nexus between unconscious material, embodied images and transformation is clearly suggested. Thus, by eliciting unconscious content such as moods, feelings, and ephemeral images from dreams and fantasies, and by ‘making visible’, by crystallising these images and exploring the meaning and purpose of these visual insights, transformation is possible; such change being not only constructive in alleviating psychological discord, but also potentially in ‘developing a rich and sustaining inner life’ (Biddulph, 1994, p. 7).

Archetypes in dreams and fantasy

Also worth noting in this inquiry, for three reasons, are archetypes. First, according to Jungian psychology, archetypes are found in unconscious content, including dreams and fantasies,

and are a powerful influence in the development of the psyche. Second, archetypes often manifest in the form of images, and third, they often appear during mid-life.

According to Jung (1966), archetypes are ‘primordial images common to humanity [which] lie sleeping’ (p. 65) in a deeper layer of the unconscious—the ‘collective unconscious’—which appear universally and repeatedly in common forms of mythical motifs and symbols. Jung also believed that within this collective unconscious is the source of human spirituality.

Although described by nouns and portrayed as inner beings in the psyche, archetypes are metaphors, intuitive concepts, potentials for apparent (but difficult to define or quantify) kinds of energy or action (Small, 1996). The devil, for example, ‘is a variant of the “shadow” archetype’, that is, of the ‘dangerous aspect of the unrecognized dark half of the personality’ (Jung, 1966, p. 96). Another archetype, which often appears in dreams and fantasies as the ‘unknown woman’, and is seen as particularly important in men’s psychological development, is what Jung called the *anima*¹³—a man’s feminine traits—in which may be awakened a new sense of intuition, feeling, moods and sensitivity typically associated with women. O’Connor states that:

The average mid-life man finds himself besieged by moodiness, rage and overwhelming feelings of despair and depression, against which he realizes that his rational self is useless. It is here that Lady Anima takes over, sometimes destructively, sometimes constructively and more often than not a combination of both. It is now, at mid-life, time to descend and face that which has been banished to Hades or the unconscious (O’Connor, 1993, pp. 38-39).

In contemporary practice with Australian men, for example, O’Connor (1993) applies the Jungian process of exploring images from dreams and fantasies to the ‘descent and ascent process that man at mid-life is called to in the company of his anima’ (p. 43), the conflicts and struggles of discovering and acknowledging what his ‘unknown woman’—his hidden, feeling, feminine self, his moods—has ‘captured in the unconscious’ (p. 210), and sifting this through the masculine spirit of discrimination and logic.

Of these mythological images aroused within a person Jung observed:

An interior spiritual world whose existence we never suspected opens out and displays content which seems to stand in sharpest contrast to all our former ideas (Jung, 1966, p. 77).

While potentially a source of great enrichment to the inner life, Jung (1966) also cautioned that archetypes must be carefully and quickly integrated with the conscious, because of the risk of projecting these images onto others, and of indiscriminately discarding former values and ideals, as may be observed in the ‘acting out’, for example, by contemporary mid-life men of childhood and adolescent fantasies (O’Connor, 1993).

The idea of archetypes, then, is significant to this inquiry because they are often manifest as images, and because of their powerful influence on the psyche, particularly in their potential to

13. The Latin words *animus*, ‘spirit’, and *anima*, ‘soul’, are the same as the Greek *anemos*, ‘wind’ (Jung, 1969, p. 345). Also see Jung, 1966, pp. 188-211.

enrich the inner life when brought to the light of the conscious, and because they often manifest at mid-life.

Self, other and art

Artists, not surprisingly, as well as philosophers, have much to say about the role of imagery and aesthetic artefacts. Sophisticated and extensive bodies of literature exist on art, the psychology and the philosophy of art, each with its own conflicts, confluences and complementary ideas, not to mention the complexities of dialogue between the disciplines. While it is beyond the scope of this project to discuss the breadth or the depth of these in detail, some facets of art, the philosophy of aesthetics and additional aspects of psychology will be referred to in order to contrast or augment the literature and understanding of the psyche, art and its significance for contemporary mid-life males presented so far.

Psychoanalytical theories are concerned, generally, with the meaning of psychic content, addressing issues of pleasure, aggression, and development of the self, however more recent developments of classical Freudian theory, such as ego psychology, adopt less regressive perspectives and regard creative expression as a mark of individuality. While these theories focus essentially on intrapsychic¹⁴ processes, object relations theory and the philosophy of aesthetics explore, albeit in different modes,¹⁵ the concept of self in the world, the formation of self-consciousness in relation to the ‘sensible world of other beings and things’ (Crowther, 1993, p. 1)—or *Otherness*, to use the philosophical term—a world over which we exert limited control, and which exceeds the limits of our finite understanding.

As these theories and perspectives, like those previously presented, speak to or coincide with the challenges raised for contemporary mid-life males—isolation from self and the world, emotional immaturity and the need for greater self-fulfilment and empowerment—they are of particular relevance to this research. About the key to these challenges, Winnicott (1991), one of the originators of object relations theory, is clear:

It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, [which] carries with it the sense of futility for the individual and is associated with the idea that nothing matters and life is not worth living. In a tantalizing way many individuals have experienced just enough creative living to recognize that for most of their time they are living uncreatively, as if caught up in the creativity of someone else, or of a machine (Winnicott, 1991, p. 65).

Indeed, he says that living uncreatively in the world ‘is recognized as illness in psychiatric terms’ (p. 65). Object relations and the philosophy of aesthetics are concerned with the way in which we imbue our environment with meaning, as well as notions of harmony, ‘oneness’ and

14. Intrapsychic means within or inside the psyche.

15. Psychology’s emphasis often appears to be on the inner life of the artist in relation to the aesthetic object. Philosophy is interested intrinsically in the aesthetic object, the ability to stimulate and deepen awareness of an audience through their subjective response to ambiguous, symbolic material (Spitz, 1985).

‘beauty’. In this movement towards the essence and completeness, art—the symbolic embodiment of sensory or imaginative material—occupies a special place (Crowther, 1993; Spitz, 1985).

Art and inner life

Having discussed the psychoanalytical approach of transformation through therapy and the use of imagery in dreams and fantasy, including the idea of giving these visible form, one specific means of making contact with one’s own genuine experience and developing productive abilities can be clearly demonstrated. It is through making art (Arnheim, 1986; Moon, 2002). Jackson Pollock said, ‘The source of my painting is the unconscious’ (quoted in Cernuschi, 1992, p. 1). The Romantic critical tradition suggests that ‘a work of art is essentially the internal made external, ...embodying the combined product of the poet’s (artist’s) perceptions, thoughts and feelings’ (Abrams quoted in Spitz, 1985, p. 29). Spitz points out that this idea predates and strongly parallels Freud’s pathographic approach in that it is ‘maximally concerned with the narrative of an artist’s inner life as it can be inferred from a careful study of his works’ (Spitz, 1985, p. 29) and other biographical material, and that not only may art directly express feelings but also indirectly convey repressed emotions. The philosopher Arnheim states that:

Art...exerts an uncompromising logic by which it compels its maker to shape the facts according to their intrinsic nature, regardless of what his personal desire and fears might prefer. Art can present the facts so unmistakably that they often state their demands with more power than they do in daily experience (Arnheim, 1986, pp. 256-257).

Among prominent artists the value of art is repeatedly clear. Henry Moore, for example, experienced through the creation of his sculptures a spiritual vitality. For Magritte painting was a means of giving his thoughts visible form. And Kandinsky declared that he viewed the activity of painting as both releasing and redemptive—and also extremely difficult (Taylor, 1989).

While we assume numerous qualities of the aesthetic domain¹⁶ in examples from well-known artists, it is worth clarifying those qualities that are most relevant to this research into images from the mid-life male psyche. Though it may appear in the images documented here, ‘refinement’ (Crowther, 1993, p. 182), in terms of the artist’s ability to manipulate the medium and work within the rules of art is not an expectation. Neither is ‘innovation’ (p. 183) with respect to breaking artistic conventions or using a medium in a new way an expectation. What *is* assumed, though, is ‘originality’ (p. 182) in terms of each image being the embodiment of an individual’s subjective creation. Another feature of aesthetic experience is that of ‘disinterest’ (p. 181), that in the experience of enjoyment of art little or even no logical presupposition of utilitarian value exists, but rather an appreciation of engagement with ‘a more global sense of life’ (p. 182)—perhaps one remedy for men’s ‘isolation from self and the world’ (Biddulph, 1994, p. 4).

16. For an explanation of these qualities see Crowther, P. (1993). *Defining Art: Questions of Creativity and Originality, in Art and embodiment: From aesthetics to self-consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Artist as audience

Another theory directly connected to aesthetic experience and a rich inner life is that of *ego psychology* which, while building upon Freudian insights, provides a strength-based, non-pathological perspective on artistic creativity and the psyche. Kris (1964), in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, notes the potential of art as a means of creative expression because often aesthetic solutions, compared with scientific and mathematical solutions ‘bear to a much higher degree...the stamp of the solver, his individuality’ (p. 252). This expressive, creative process, found typically in fantasy and dreams, occurs by relaxing ego functions in a disregard of external, rational control. However in the process of transforming sensory material into aesthetic artefacts, the artist, rather than being held hostage to regressive inner drives through the relaxation of ego functions, is purposefully able to access primary process,¹⁷ becoming both creator and his own audience in ‘a continual interplay between creation and criticism’ (p. 253). He stated that:

Emotions, as they are embodied in aesthetic activity, are not blind, but incorporated in structures of a complex patterning which result only from thought taking (Kris, 1964, p. 252).

While viewed from a different perspective, a connection exists between this and Jung’s concept of the complementary tension between unconscious and conscious. As Jung stated of artists:

The very advantage that such individuals enjoy consists precisely in the permeability of the partition separating the conscious and unconscious. (Jung, 1969, p. 70)

The evidence from a variety of sources, while deviating in approach, reinforces the idea (as previously stated, but here in a more strength-based form) that a strong relationship may exist between a person’s development and individuality, and the creation of art by consciously giving visible, sensory form to unconscious material such as an image, a mood, or a feeling.

Self and other—Transitional phenomena and aesthetic experience

A further perspective that is of significance to images from the mid-life psyche is *object-relations theory*, which states that an intermediate realm or *transitional space* (Winnicott, 1991, p. 64) exists between an individual’s internal reality and the reality of the external world. This development of the Freudian pleasure and reality principles is significant here because it provides a basis for a revelatory rather than regressive understanding of the relationship between: the experience and loss of pleasure; the need for creativity in life in order to experience wellbeing; and the capacity to use of objects which are both physical and symbolic in the process of maturation and discovering oneself in the world (Winnicott, 1991).

Object-relations theory suggests that pre-oedipal symbiotic experiences of the baby with its mother have a profound effect on individuals (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1989). According to

17. Primary process, unfettered by the ‘rational order of words and logic of social conformity’, is a way of experiencing unconscious or preconscious content, such as emotions and subjective meaning, defying conscious, ‘objective’ spatial and temporal definitions (Robbins, 1994, p. xi).

Winnicott (1991), a newborn baby, in a state of absolute dependence and undifferentiation from the mother (for example being 'given' the breast as and when he needs it) experiences a state of idyllic pleasure through its sense of fusion or union with its mother, and thus gains an illusion of 'magical control' or 'omnipotence' (p. 47).

Winnicott (1991) argues that in order for the baby to mature, to move from his idyllic state into the reality of his wider external environment, he must increasingly experience loss of this pleasurable world of omnipotent control through the delay or denial of having his needs met. As he becomes progressively alert to his separateness from the comforting 'oneness' with his mother, in order to cushion his anxiety the infant attaches to a 'transitional object' (p. xiii) such as a blanket or teddy, using it as part 'self' and part 'not-self'. According to Winnicott, through this natural development of 'the capacity to use objects' (p. 89) subjectively, which later occurs through spontaneous play and imagination, the infant learns to differentiate between his inner world and external reality. Winnicott applied these observations as a therapist, based on his premise that an adult, given the opportunities for creative sensorimotor play, can experience the 'exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation' (p. 64) in this realm between the individual inner and outer world of reality. If what we discover in this 'unintegrated state of the personality' is reflected back, this 'makes the individual to be, and be found; and eventually enables himself or herself to postulate the existence of the self' (p. 64).

Winnicott (1991) suggested that encounters in this transitional space are the precursor of adult cultural experience, however Spitz (1985) has extrapolated the idea of the transitional object as 'prototypic of the work of art' (p. 146). Indeed, in relation to the pre-oedipal state of pleasure that predates the experience of separation, Spitz points out the similarity between the philosophical notion of harmony or beauty:

The sense of fusion that the infant experiences with the "all good" mother who exists as part of self, and his accompanying sense of wellbeing and pleasure, are analogous to what some philosophers have identified as aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic emotion...or the sense of beauty (Spitz, 1985, p. 141).

In direct reference to images from the psyche, Marion Milner (1971) provides a personal account of her experience of transitional phenomena in her book, *On Not Being Able to Paint*. Worth noting is that her book was published towards the end or soon after mid-life.¹⁸ Like Winnicott, Milner sees less differentiated 'spontaneous, and not compliant or acquiescent' (Winnicott, 1991, p. 51) states as revelatory:

It was the discovery that it was possible at times to produce drawings or sketches in an entirely different way from any that I had been taught, a way of letting hand and eye do exactly what pleased them without any conscious working to a preconceived intention. This discovery had at first been so disconcerting that I had tried to forget all about it; for it seemed to threaten, not only familiar beliefs about will-power and conscious effort, but

18. Born in 1900, the book was first published when Milner was approximately 50 years of age.

also, as I suppose all irruptions from the unconscious mind do, it threatened one's sense of oneself as a more or less known entity (Milner, 1971, p. xviii).

From a philosophical point of view, Hegel (1975) states that 'the universal need for art...is man's rational need to uplift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self' (i, p. 31). Crowther (1993) captures this idea of the fusion of inner and outer worlds, the symbolic embodiment of subjective content, when he states that in the creation and reception of art 'we can encounter the very flesh of self-consciousness' (p. 172).

Again, from multiple perspectives, literature supports the assertion that in objectifying the images of the psyche, the symbolic embodiment of subjective inner reality, by entering the realm in which the boundaries between inner and outer worlds dissolve and meld, exists the potential for insight and transformation, for creative living in the world, and the experience of harmony and pleasure, of 'oneness' with the world—key issues for Australian men at mid-life.

Art therapy and self-enquiry

Art therapy is another complex discipline¹⁹ concerned with intrapsychic growth in both the traditional sense of therapy or for self-enquiry, specifically through the use of art. Its place, therefore, is important within this review. Malchiodi provides a basic insight into art therapy:

'Therapy' comes from the Greek word *therapeia*, which means "to be attentive to." This meaning underscores the art therapy process in two ways. In most cases, a skilled professional attends to the individual who is making the art. The person's guidance is key to the therapeutic process. This supportive relationship is necessary to guide the art-making experience and to help the individual find meaning through it along the way. The other important aspect is the attendance of the individual to his or her own personal process of making art and to giving the art product personal meaning—i.e. finding a story, description, or meaning for the art (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 5).

Art therapy as a method for self-enquiry 'is an attempt to come to know oneself with as much truth as is possible' (Moon, 2002, p. 57). In the process which they call 'visual journeying', Ganim & Fox note the importance of words in relation to images in the process of self-enquiry:

An image is an expansive way of perceiving an experience with all the subtleties that occur as the body-mind processes that experience. Words balance the process by contracting our perception, thus enabling us to discern and define the parameters of the experience. Our verbal responses to a drawing can actually help keep us focused once we have accessed an emotion or feeling through imagery (Ganim & Fox, 1999, pp. 6-7).

Recent research also explores the relevance of imagery and art in self-enquiry, including theses such as: Slattery, (2001), *The educational researcher as artist working within*; Sweetman,

19. Many parallels exist between psychotherapy and art therapy. However Schaverien (1989) suggests that the key difference between them is that in psychotherapy the main aim is the analysis of the patient's transference—the unconsciously transmitted feelings and fears of the patient—whereas in art therapy the artwork itself is a potential object of transference and 'may exhibit, ...contain it, and powerfully influence the counter-transference' (p. 147). Deliberations about approaches abound, corresponding roughly with debates around orthodox Freudian, Jungian, behavioural, object relations and transpersonal psychology, to name a few (Leader, 2000; MacLagan, 1989; Robbins, 1994; Sweetman, 2000).

(2000), *A soul approach to art therapy self-inquiry*; and Kathleen Sands, (2003), *The gift of fire: A creative journey at mid-life*.

The literature of art therapy and art-related self-enquiry, then, provides further evidence for the belief that the embodiment of images—dreams, fantasies, stories, emotions, or our environment—is both a process and a product, within and upon which a person can reflect in order to discern and construct its meaning which, indeed, returns us to the fact that to make art and reflect on it is a means to discover the language and reason of the soul, a discovery needed or wanted by many Australian mid-life males in search of a sense of fulfilment and wellbeing.

Summary

While brief and by no means comprehensive, and wanting neither to oversimplify nor disregard differences within this diverse array of psychological, philosophical, art and art therapy perspectives, the literature nonetheless provides a framework for exploring the role of images from the psyche within a range of possible needs, drives, desires and experiences of contemporary mid-life Australian males. Though this intra- and cross-disciplinary review adds to complexity, it also arguably allows for a varied sample of individual experiences. As Grof argues of divergent psychological and psychotherapeutic perspectives:

The major mistake of these discrepant schools is that each tends to generalize its approach and apply it to the entire spectrum [of consciousness to which they have adapted themselves], whereas it is appropriate only for a particular level. A truly encompassing and integrated psychology of the future will make use of the complementary insights offered by each school of psychology (Grof, 1985, p. 132).

The literature reviewed, then, provides substantive grounds from which the following broad conclusions may be made—

A human drive towards growth, wholeness, and self-consciousness exists, both intrapsychic, and of the self, in relation to other people and environment. This drive can include the need to resolve internal conflict and sense of loss at mid-life, which may be the cumulative result of unresolved pre-oedipal, oedipal, and adolescent issues. This urge may also include intrapsychic and transpersonal desires for pleasure and union, the experience of ‘beauty’ or ‘oneness’ with self and the world—reconciliation and harmony with ‘Otherness’—and achieving one’s highest potential.

In order to achieve resolution, insight or transformation with respect to these needs and desires, access to inner unconscious or preconscious content is required. Such content may be experienced through therapy, accessing primary process or within transitional space, creating a link between unconscious and conscious, or between inner and outer worlds, while the conditions under which this content can be experienced include realms of non-compliance and freedom, spontaneity, playfulness, and creative imagination.

To engage in creative artistic expression can both provide a means of accessing inner content by encouraging these conditions, while simultaneously resulting in the aesthetic

embodiment of inner content discovered. This embodied aesthetic experience may be shared in the form of showing and telling, or re-telling to others. Regardless of inner content being perceived as regressive or creative, reflection and validation by another person, or self-reflection with the artist as his own audience, is a necessity in the process of individual transformation.

To engage with and give physical expression to images from the mid-life male psyche, therefore, whether in order to resolve inner unconscious conflict or to creatively explore the potential of oneself in this world, may assist in developing not only a rich and sustaining inner life, but also a sense of oneness with the world, providing the potential for change, challenge, release and fulfilment.

Having presented the views of a variety of experts and researchers in order to establish the significance of relationships between imagery, psychological growth and wellbeing in contemporary Australian mid-life males, the next task is to establish a methodological and practical framework in which to further explore these issues by engaging with the participants and the empirical material.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We imagine a form of qualitative inquiry in the 21st century that is simultaneously minimal, existential, autoethnographic, vulnerable, performative, and critical. This form of enquiry erases traditional distinctions among epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics; nothing is value-free. It seeks to ground the self in a sense of the sacred, to connect the ethical, respectful self dialogically to nature and the worldly environment. It seeks to embed this self in deeply storied histories of sacred spaces and local places, to illuminate the unity of this self in its relationship to the reconstructed, moral, and sacred natural world.

(Lincoln & Denzin, 2000, p. 1052)

*The researcher...may be seen as a bricoleur, as a maker of quilts, or, as...
a person who assembles images into montages.*

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 4)

Qualitative research method

In order to build an understanding of whether embodying and reflecting on images from the psyche contribute to an enriched inner life for mid-life Australian males, qualitative methodology has been chosen. To grasp the richness and sophistication of the phenomenon and issues investigated, a combination of cross-disciplinary perspectives, multi-methodological¹ practices, empirical² data and a variety of interrelated interpretive methods is employed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 2002). Qualitative research is multi-paradigmatic³ and therefore subject to its own tensions. As Denzin states, it:

on one hand, is drawn to a broad, interpretive...and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is drawn to more narrowly defined positivist, ...humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis. Further, these tensions can be combined in the same project, bringing...both critical and humanistic perspectives to bear (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 4).

Collective case study

This relationship between enhancing understanding and explicating human experience is evident in the *collective case study* approach (Stake, 1995) and will be clarified further in relation to this project under the heading *Scope of analysis and interpretation. Collective case*

1. Methodology means 'the methods or organizing principles underlying a particular art, science, or other area of study' (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999).

2. Empirical means 'Based on or characterized by observation and experiment rather than theory' (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999).

3. A paradigm 'is an example that serves as a pattern or model for something, especially one that forms the basis of a methodology or theory' (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999).

study (Stake, 2000, p. 437) is chosen as an approach because it provides a practical framework in which to collect, process and present empirical material ‘to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization’ (p. 437). A special benefit of the case study approach is its potential to unearth data via ‘in-depth examination of a few people...over time’ (Neuman, 1991, p. 27), and Yin (2002) suggests that case study enables and fulfils the purposes of exploration, description and explanation.

Case study embraces multi-methodologies in its effort to sophisticate and communicate these experiences, and to lower the probability of misinterpretation, a process known as triangulation⁴ (Flick, 2002; Stake, 2000). Multiple sources of information that depict experiences and meanings in individuals’ lives—which may include personal experience, interviews, participant observation, physical or cultural artefacts, observational, reflective and visual texts—are assembled and studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002). The literature review, for example, drawn from numerous intra- and multi-disciplinary perspectives, provides a diverse theoretical framework in relation to many aspects of images from the mid-life Australian male psyche. Worth noting is that most of these psychological and art therapy theories are based upon clinical observation by practitioners within their fields.

Stake (1995) suggests that in addition to forming ‘explicated generalizations’ (p. 85), typically from authors and teachers in a formal or explicit manner, a major benefit of the case study approach is the potential for readers to form what he calls ‘naturalistic generalizations’ (p. 85)—subjective generalisations from first hand and vicarious experience—for example when sympathy and imagination are evoked in response to the embodied personal experiences of the research participants. Primary material, therefore, such as personal narrative and the accounts of participants is central⁵ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Stake, 2000).

Interview methodology

Twin aims of interviewing in this research are to enhance understanding and to maintain a substantial level of each participant’s ‘voice’—the veracity of their experiences and points of view (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interview methodology used in gathering information about images from the mid-life male psyche is phenomenological⁶ in nature, based on ‘the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated’ (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 112). The purpose of this type of in-depth interviewing is to describe the essence and meaning of a phenomenon common to a number of individuals (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

4. See Flick, 2002, p. 227, for a more comprehensive explanation of triangulation.

5. For other conditions for naturalistic generalization see Stake, 1995, pp. 85-86.

6. Phenomenology is ‘in philosophy, the science or study of phenomena, things as they are perceived; the philosophical investigation and description of conscious experience in all its varieties without reference to the question of whether what is experienced is objectively real’ (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999). According to Marshall, phenomenology is ‘the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview’ (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 112).

Typically based on past as well as current experience, some variation occurs here due to the inherent experimental, participatory and action-based nature of the research, in that phenomena are not simply observed, but that much of the empirical material—in the form of aesthetic artefacts and written observations and reflections—is *created* by each individual usually in response to the research questions. Worth noting in relation to this methodology in this specific case, however, is that in art—the embodied subject—‘the relation between past, present, future and possibility is...reciprocal in the most complex way’ (Crowther, 1993, p. 171), engaging a fusion of emotions and reason.

The interviews are a mix of unstructured and structured—unstructured in the sense that many questions are open-ended and not pre-established, encouraging respondents to elaborate on issues, thoughts, feelings, and the phenomenon in focus (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Once this focus is established, however, some closed questioning and *a priori* categorisation occurs. Indeed, in the context of the potential for transformational experiences while engaged in this sphere of research (as demonstrated in the literature review), the aspect of significant moments—or ‘epiphanies’ (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 657)—in the lives of participants was considered possible, while by no means a presumption.

Qualitative research also assumes a personal rather than ‘impersonal’ or ‘invisible’ role for the inquirer (Stake, 1995; Tedlock, 2000) and therefore a subjective and interpretive perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 1992; Flick, 2002). An argument can be made that the interviewer’s personal experience of divulging personal images and the feelings evoked in relation to these, is significant. Just as significant, one can argue, may be a *lack* of such experience. An aspect of phenomenological interviewing employed in order to ‘gain clarity from her own preconceptions’ (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 112) is that of self-examination, the researcher writing of his own experience and in this manner bracketing his experience from that of other respondents. This process begins before interviewing, and may continue through the research project (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Participant self-inquiry

This research is also situated clearly within a social and cultural context of participants being mid-life, Australian and male. Indeed, this investigation may also be viewed potentially as emancipatory in terms of actively engaging mid-life males socially and culturally within their world (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In relation to these issues, ethnography, as a method, engages directly with people in specific experiences in order to understand their ‘beliefs, motivations and behaviours’ (Tedlock, 2000, p. 470), and locates these encounters and insights within a more comprehensive, meaningful context of society or culture (Tedlock, 2000). Much of the ‘participant observation’ in this research, however, is *self*-observation by the subjects through written and spoken reflection. Some of the reflection is personal narrative, however as the participants are co-researchers in

many (but not all) respects, this investigation can be seen to contain substantial elements of autoethnography, which is described by Ellis as:

an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze...focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inwards exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resists cultural interpretations...Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry...photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structures, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought and language (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

Self-reflection on the part of all participants, in combination with interview material, forms a substantial body of in-depth, individual empirical material, contributing to the multi-method and multi-source approach.

Ethical considerations

The wellbeing of participants is seen as paramount. Participants have consented to the use of their artwork, reflections and interview material for this project, and names have been changed to maintain anonymity. Due to the psychological nature of the enquiry, a psychotherapist was available for any of the participants to speak with, should the necessity arise. Participants were encouraged to disclose only what they considered was in the best interests of their wellbeing. For example, to maintain his sense of privacy, one candidate supplied photographic reproductions of his original artwork. In another instance, one participant discussed his aim of creating a series of paintings or drawings in reference to seriously traumatic experiences earlier in his life. On reflection, he changed his mind, believing that pursuing these memories would be obstructive to his wellbeing.

Scope of analysis and interpretation

In terms of analysis and interpretation of empirical data, the issues falling within the scope of this research are those connected to the aim of exploring what contemporary Australian mid-life men consider to be a rich and sustaining inner life, and to better understand whether creating imagery or art as a form of expression of the heart and mind, and reflecting upon this process and the created work can contribute to this inner life and wellbeing. These issues may be raised:

- by the research questions, either explicitly or implicitly;
- directly or indirectly by participants;
- in relation to the literature review, and;
- by the primary researcher, particularly in terms of generalisation, or inductive process, and also in terms of addressing inconsistencies or evidence that may contradict assertions made.

Areas *beyond* the scope of this research include the interpretation of participant personality traits or type through, for instance, Rorschach testing or the analysis of the form of the artwork, such as the type of research undertaken by Machotka & Felton (2003), in which participant artworks were clustered by style and compared with data from individual clinical interviews and surveys.

While meanings and interpretations of their own images by the participants are a key feature of the data, avoided generally by the primary researcher are exclusive attempts to ‘decipher’ the meanings of the images in terms of symbolic content, as each symbol may have layers of various meaning—psychological and cultural (Gilroy & Dalley, 1989). Warnings by experts in the fields of art therapy and psychoanalysis are clear. Art therapist, David MacLagan, believes:

that trying to ‘translate’ fantasy into reality can inflict a sense of ‘otherness’ on to it, a set of rules and conventions which serve little purpose other than the aggrandisement of the translator (Gilroy & Dalley, 1989, p. 3).

And Jung, himself an expert in interpretation of dreams and fantasy, states that:

the doctor should assiduously guard against clever feats of interpretation. For the important thing is not to interpret and understand the fantasies, but primarily to experience them (Jung, 1966, p. 213).

The key principle in this decision is that external interpretation, even if correct, may not be in the best interests of the wellbeing of the participants.

While neither a formal requirement of this project, nor explicit in the research questions, notions of individual transformation, fulfilment and wellbeing are implicit, and are evident within the literature relating to images from the mid-life psyche, evident in the participant data, evident in the motivation for this research, and are thus addressed as part of the phenomena and case study approach.

Research questions

In order to provide a workable structure for this conceptual schema the following questions were developed:

- What do mid-life Australian males consider to be a ‘rich and sustaining inner life?’
- Does creating imagery, or art, as a form of expression of the heart and mind, and reflection upon this process, contribute to the development of a rich and sustaining inner life?

Summary

This investigation, then, is multi-method and uses multiple sources of material, consistent with the collective case study approach. The methodologies employed are a hybrid. Used in less than ‘pure’ form due to the fact that though the psychological phenomena and cultural context being investigated can be observed, in order to focus on the issues being investigated, all participants have been actively engaged in the creation of empirical material, including self-observation.

In tension with the desire to discover, to retain the multiplicity of ‘voice’ and to avoid oversimplification exist the natural tendencies to interpret, to distil, and to seek evidence of transformational experiences. The aim, therefore, of the multi-method, cross-disciplinary, multi-source case study is to provide a combination of subjective, empirical, theoretical and embodied data that will engage, inform and enable greater understanding of the richness and complexity of images from the contemporary Australian mid-life male in relation to his inner life and well being.

CHAPTER 4 DESIGN

It was the discovery that it was possible at times to produce drawings or sketches in an entirely different way from any that I had been taught, a way of letting hand and eye do exactly what pleased them without any conscious working to a preconceived intention. This discovery had at first been so disconcerting that I had tried to forget all about it; for it seemed to threaten, not only familiar beliefs about will-power and conscious effort, but also, as I suppose all irruptions from the unconscious mind do, it threatened one's sense of oneself as a more or less known entity
(Milner, 1971, p. xviii).

Research procedure

This chapter deals with practical considerations associated with meeting the aims of this research into images from the contemporary Australian mid-life male psyche, through the collective case study approach and the methodologies outlined previously.

Selection of participants

The approved intention of the research project was to include five participants. As a small number of participants was required, information regarding the aim of the investigation was disseminated by word of mouth through a variety of friends, colleagues, associates and other connections. Potential individual participants telephoned, spoke directly, or approached me indirectly through the network of contacts. Inquirers were informed of the criteria for inclusion and the research questions, then self-selected on the basis of this information, or after asking additional questions concerning the project. Of eight enquirers, three chose not to participate. All participants who began also completed the research process.

While the participants are individual mid-life men prompted to engage in this domain of artistic expression and reflection, consistently practising artists were excluded from the selection criteria. Previous experience in some form of artistic practice was not, however, a reason for exclusion.

Briefing of participants

Each participant was met and briefed on key aspects of the enquiry and its process, including establishing that each fitted the Australian mid-life male cohort. The objectives and the research questions were reiterated and a time line discussed, including the expectation that individual progression through the process would be in the main self-directed, with periodic contact from the primary researcher to review progress if necessary for any reason. All participants agreed in advance that periodic contact would be beneficial, particularly to help determine the most suitable time within the process for an interview, possibly at times to prompt progress, to provide

artwork, reflections or other empirical material helpful to the research, or to discuss any questions or issues arising in relation to the enquiry.

Also discussed and clarified were ethical issues of participants' wellbeing, including their anonymity, the availability of professional counselling if necessary, and that original artwork supplied by them for the project would be reproduced and returned.

Conversation was also held to clarify the 'source' of artwork, which was to be in relation images from their inner life. The freedom to access imagination, feelings and other forms of inner imagery was encouraged. Techniques of active imagination (Johnson, 1986) and spontaneous drawing and painting (Milner, 1971) were introduced and explained to each participant, if required. These suggestions include body-mind techniques of relaxation, recalling images from dreams, fantasy and memories, and notions of suspended or non-judgmental self-observation including inner dialogue with or about dream characters, images, thoughts and feelings. Each participant already possessed some understanding of these notions, and was encouraged to pursue any process that worked for himself, while being open to alternative or new suggestions. These techniques could be applied to both visual and written data. Visual journaling was also broached as a means of dealing with both images and words.

Freedom to use any chosen artistic medium was affirmed and options discussed, if necessary: pencil, pastel, charcoal, paint, photography, mixed media, and so forth. As long as the medium facilitated expression of images from the psyche, participants were free to choose. While individual desire for competency in aesthetic form or chosen medium was viewed as rightly acceptable and normal (indeed, it may be a significant ingredient in a participant's experience), made clear was the fact that aesthetic skill was not the primary aim of the research.

Types of empirical data, collection and presentation

Concerning the embodiment of inner images and the responses evoked through reflection on the process and artwork, the empirical data collected includes visual journals, personal descriptions of images, written personal narrative, written personal reflections, and transcripts of interviews held with individual participants. As with choice of content and media, the type of data and the sequence in which it was produced varied according to each individual's approach to the overall process. In-depth interviews were conducted separately. Other material was collected as it was made available by participants.

Some background information on each participant is provided, including brief demographic details, approximate stage of mid-life and history of artistic practice. In presenting the empirical material the amount, type and combination of data varies, depending upon the individual case. For example, when telling a story, a substantial amount of material is reproduced directly. In each instance, participants' written reflections are juxtaposed with interview or other primary data in order to provide a continuum of material on the particular issue. Overall, participants' written data are used where contributing substantially to the issues addressed, including where they

may contradict comments, assertions or generalisations made. Data excluded include instances of repetitious material, and material falling outside the scope of the research. Parallel to this primary written data, discussion is presented according to the principles outlined previously in the methodology chapter.

Offered, in conclusion, is a summary of the analysis and interpretation of the data, together with limitations and implications of this research into images from the contemporary Australian mid-life male.

Personal background and role of the primary researcher

‘No dog can be washed without getting wet’, stated Jung insightfully (1966, p. 293). Given that my function is both as primary researcher and participant, I readily acknowledge my subjective role in this project, based on my own experience of embodied inner images in personal transformation. Indeed, the power in the realm of these images was so profound in terms of healing and growth that I became interested in the experiences and level of engagement of other mid-life men in the domain of psychic images and reflection. From personal experience I had also become far more aware of the wounds and desire for growth and change, often latent in those around me, especially other mid-life men.

With a background in design and majors in art and education, my formal qualifications, however, exclude clinical psychology. With that in mind, the intention during this project was not to establish a therapeutic relationship with participants, but to establish rapport, empathy and communication and to find, nevertheless, an optimal distance with both a degree of neutrality and suspended attention.

Having little idea of the outcome of asking these questions about images and inner life of others, and with a strong intuitive sense of their fecundity, I have been privileged to share in the re-creation of inner visions and voices—in all their vitality and humanity—of a small group of Australian mid-life males.

CHAPTER 5 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS

To experience a dream and its interpretation is very different to having a tepid rehash set before you on paper. Everything about this psychology is, in the deepest sense, experience.
(Jung, 1966, p. 117)

All our projections have the quality of interpretation. There are no raw facts vis-à-vis perception, memory, and imagination. Rather, these are given a distinct character by virtue of the unique personal history of the subject who experiences or projects them. In a word, experience is stylized. This dimension is central to the artwork. For, in the artist's handling of the medium, and articulation of semantic content, he or she must select and emphasize those aspects which engage their interest. As Merleau-Ponty points out, the artist 'carves out relief' in things.
(Crowther p. 171-172)

Demographic and other background information

Included for each participant is background information such as their stage in mid-life and the context of their involvement in this research project. The participants, from first to fourth generation Australian, are from South African, Western European, South-eastern European, and Asian backgrounds. All are educated to diploma level or above, while marital status includes single, married and divorced.

The collection of material varies in quantity, media used, time spent by each participant, and the sequence in which each person engaged with the process. The chart below records the sequence of events or data produced:

Participant	Harry	David	Robert	Sam	Jon
Process	Brief	Brief	Brief	Photographs*	Brief
	(Visual) Diary	Artwork*	Visual Diary	Brief	Initial response
	Artwork*	Reflections	Interview	Reflections	Art/Reflections
	Reflections	Artwork	Artwork	Interview	Interview
	Interview	Interview	Reflections	Reflections	Reflections
	Reflections	Reflections	-	-	-
*An asterisk denotes ongoing creation of artwork during the research process.					

One individual, for example, presented only one artwork, shown in two states of progress months apart (while also maintaining a private visual journal), whereas another participant presented eleven drawings. Some individuals responded formally in writing to questions raised during their brief, some engaged in visual journaling for a period before embarking on creating

specific artwork, and others offered additional reflection at the end of the process. Interviews occurred at different phases of the process for each participant, too, based significantly upon when each participant felt he was 'ready to talk'.

That one individual had recently begun creating images before engaging in the research process is offered as an example of the pre-existence of the phenomenon of images from the mid-life male psyche. Another participant had previously kept a journal over a considerable period of time, while one had kept written journals at times, beginning a visual journal during this project.

Previous artistic experience of participants varied, from one with no experience, to others with some art or design education or experience, but included no participant who was currently or had consistently been an artist. Discussed later in relation to individual data, the key point emphasised here is that the images presented in this project were made primarily in relation to each participant's inner life and meaning for himself. The works constitute art in Crowther's (1993) terms of 'originality', that is, each image being the embodiment of an individual's subjective creation; in terms of 'disinterest', that in the experience of enjoyment of art, little if any *presumption* of utilitarian value exists, but rather a sense of engagement with a more universal awareness of life.

As discussed earlier, 'refinement' (Crowther, 1993, p. 182), in terms of the artist's ability to manipulate the medium and work within the rules of art is not an expectation, neither is 'innovation' (p. 183) with respect to breaking artistic conventions or using a medium in a new way an expectation. The quality of refinement, not surprisingly, varies between participants, depending upon their artistic experience and skill, and this issue of competency with the medium has some significance in some participants' minds.

Media used to create the artworks presented include colour photography, charcoal, pastels, acrylic paint, oil paint, and gouache with a small amount of collage, while pen, pencil, photos and magazine clippings were used in the visual journaling.

While a significant amount of participants' written reflection and interview data is presented in order to provide a significant picture of their experience it is, nevertheless, offered in an edited, integrated form. For instance, rather than repeat data in two forms, such as when interview data match closely a participant's written reflections, the more poignant or illuminating account (in the opinion of this researcher) is presented. However such repetition or similarity between the various sources of each individual are noted. Where differences occur between the various sources of data for an individual, the material is included.

In order to reproduce all artwork as well as possible, six colour printing instead of the usual four process colours is sometimes employed. Apart from artworks, participants' data such as reflections, visual journal material and interview data are presented in the left column, with the research analysis and discussion presented 'somewhat parallel', in the right column.

Sam



Figure 1, Japanese Barber, Tokyo

Sam

‘It was like “Aha!” A breakthrough in identifying compassionate humanity for other human beings, as an adult rather than someone still going through life still being upset. That’s what it brought up.’— Sam

‘It’s been an enjoyable experience; it is mentally relaxing. There’s nothing about work, about anything else. It’s just time out for me.’ — Sam

Background

Sam is a first generation Australian of Italian descent. Tertiary educated, married with no children and running a successful business, in terms of age Sam is in early mid-life. Before becoming involved in this investigation he had recently begun taking photographs of barbershops spontaneously while in Japan, and continued to photograph a series of barbershops in Australia and Italy—

Photographs, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion

Sam’s story

I’ve never told anyone, except my wife, until this point. It was like an immediate obsession at the point at which I took the photo of my first barbershop. It was 1997 Japan in the back street of an outer suburb of Tokyo. I saw a building which to me was quite out of place in these typical Japanese back streets: a beautiful 50s western style retro architecture shop building (see Figure 1). It was weathered, rundown and closed; in fact abandoned. It had some black signage across the top of the building: the letters “AR R” only remaining of the word barber. The colours and textures in the Japanese light and the old barber’s pole on the building face over the front door—in that moment...I’m not quite sure, but in that moment, a feeling or mood came over me of nostalgia—it looked beautiful, used, worn treasure.

When I returned to Melbourne I started to notice barbershops: old and closed, beautiful buildings not

Discussion

Told by a friend about this research project, Sam met me in a pub to talk. He was curious about the project and was also initially cautious about disclosing his fascination with photographing barbershops, should it be viewed as somewhat peculiar. His fears allayed, Sam began enthusiastically relating aspects of his story, and expressed a strong desire to participate in order to create for himself a ‘space’ and opportunity in which to delve into and elaborate the process he had spontaneously begun.

Regarding the use of photography as a medium, it should be noted that all artistic representation is abstract, as it is the subjective, inner that gives meaning to the world (Crowther, 1993). This notion is supported, in this case, by Sam’s own account of his photographs, stating that they “show a kind of emptiness, of passing”, and “a feeling or mood came over me of nostalgia—it looked beautiful, used, worn treasure.” These photographs, then, are clearly embodied images of moods or feelings.

Presented at left, Sam’s story and reflections are augmented by material from a later interview, in which he reiterated his initial story and answered questions about the value of creating and reflecting upon personal images, including his inner reconciliation with his father, and his

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 2, Japanese Barber, Tokyo

used? So I started taking slides. Most are the 'Continental Barber' (see *Figures 2-5*). What are these places—Barber Shops? Relics of the past. I do not know anyone who goes to a barbershop. These barbershops I have photographed, many of which are closed, are like memories just hanging around and nothing gets done with these properties. They just sit empty, full of lost memories. I wonder, "What happened?"

Obviously I cannot answer. However this question allows me to investigate where in my life I have memories that take up space and do nothing but constantly remind me of these memories and who am I the subject matter for? These barbershops with their doors shut are like a monument or reminder of a time long gone by, however the owners keep their memories there—not selling, not renovating, not leasing—their memories worth more than the money can ever bring in.

The photos show a kind of emptiness, of passing, something old being replaced with something new. It brings on this kind of sadness in a way that barbershops may not be much longer, that same nurturing of care may not be there for the man. It will be different, but perhaps that experience of the barbershop is going.

I ask my self, "What happened? Were barbershops more than a place to have a shave and a haircut?"

I remember as a boy, probably from the ages of five to 10 years, like a ritual every three or four months, an Italian friend of the family, a young man (John was his name), only new in Australia, would come to our home to cut my hair. I'm not sure if I liked or disliked my hair being cut, but I remember he would tell jokes and entertain me. He even had a false front tooth that every now and then he would pop out of his mouth and take me by surprise and make me laugh!

I remember how dad would organise the outside bathroom

exploration of male nurturing and grooming. Numerous issues of growth and wellbeing common to literature are evident, including:

- reconciling the father-son relationship
- tension between loss and desire;
- the significance of the feminine for men at mid-life;
- nurturing and sharing relationships with other males;
- time for oneself in relation to creative self-nurturing and reflection;
- the use of art to evoke and access psychic material; and
- implicit, the importance of being able to share one's story.

Sam's initial response after the briefing session was to write his "hair-story" as he mentioned at one point. Here the comments of art therapist Catherine Moon, in relation to one's art and story, are apt:

A fitting place to begin developing an artistic perspective... is by attending to the stories of our own lives and work. It is through these ordinary tales that we come to know and make meaning. We do this first by noticing the metaphors that present themselves and, second, by trying to discern the significance and meaning they hold for us. (Moon, 2002, p. 33)

Sam, in his art and writing appears to have applied this process for himself, intuitively. Invoked by the sophisticated metaphor of the dilapidated barbershop are memories of sensual experience and discovery: of the hidden room dusty and softly lit; of scents of soap and fragrance; of the sight and feel of the razor, the talc powder and the large, soft brush; and of the masculine sounds of initiatory jokes and laughter of his father and barber, and the regular retort: "Shorter. Cut it shorter!"

Sam makes explicit connections between his fascination with barbershops, and his memories of childhood and extended family in relation to the ritual of haircuts. Elaborating upon these relationships he describes his change in attitude towards his father—specifically in association with his father's projection that the young Sam must endure extremely short haircuts. While Sam later reflects that having the haircuts was a "soothing, relaxing, and almost nurturing experience", the conflict with his father revolves around the "war". He says, "I started looking back and as a kid I ended up hating war and being upset. My dad was passing that on, the short hair." Through this artistic, reflective process, an internal, conscious change has occurred for Sam, apparent in his statement that:

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 3, Continental Hairdresser, Melbourne

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 4, Vittorio Barber, Melbourne

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 5, Continental hairstyles, Melbourne

before John would arrive—organise the positioning of the chair and clear a space on the window sill for John's cutting tools. I remember when he would finish cutting my hair he would take out his cut-throat razor and finish off my sideburns and my neck. He then put talc Felchi azuro on a large soft brush that seemed the size of my head and proceeded to brush my face, ears, neck, forehead and nose.

Now that I reflect it was a soothing, relaxing and almost nurturing experience. I use to love it when he would come round. As this was going on dad would occasionally pop his head in to check on the progress and even indulge in the joke telling. In fact Dad's line to John would always be: "Corti piu corti!" (Shorter. Cut it shorter!) It always had to be shorter. Really short.

When we would sit at the dinner table I remember the conversations dad would have with me about when he was a young boy in Italy, during the Second World War. He would describe the poverty, the famine, the love, his friends and the games they would play; how he and his three elder brothers and his mother would hide from the Germans and crouch in a hole under 'la chesta Americana' in fear of their lives. And the very, very short haircuts and the DDT-dusting the Americans gave to stop the lice when they were put in POW camps.

Thinking of what my father and his mother and three brothers endured during the war moves me to compassion for who my father is. During that period his father was in Australia with the oldest of the sons. My grandfather came to Australia in the late 20s with two of his brothers and his eldest son. His brothers both, for a short time, were barbers.

I recall in my childhood visiting my uncle, my father's older brother. I would wander through his garage, which was like a rabbit warren. Off the side was this very small room with a small window set high in the wall—he had set it up as his hair-cutting room. It was messy

Thinking of what my father and his mother and three brothers endured during the war moves me to compassion for who my father is.

His "Aha!" moment, his "breakthrough in identifying compassionate humanity for other human beings, as an adult rather than someone still going through life still being upset", signals a new attitude—an inner transformation.

Resolving incomplete business, including reconciling with one's father, is raised by Biddulph (1994) as being essential for male wellbeing. Indeed, he states that:

You cannot get on with your life successfully until you have understood him, forgiven him and come, in some way, to respect him (Biddulph, 1994, p. 13).

The poet, Robert Bly (1996), in *The Sibling Society*, suggests that a serious failing of fathers has been the inability to understand and reconcile with their sons. At worst, blind with rage, they fight each other and together fall off the 'oedipal wall' (p. 50), resulting in sons (and fathers) struggling to find resolution of anger and aggression within themselves.

O'Connor states that:

All of life has an order within the chaos, and mid-life is both an opportunity to attend to the wounds of one's own adolescence and to begin the task of dealing with the incomplete business. For most men this is usually to do with feelings and in this sense the feminine aspect of a man is of primary importance and significance in mid-life (O'Connor, 1993, p. 38).

O'Connor (1993) explains the Oedipal myth as a metaphor for the necessity for inner psychological union of the masculine—logic and aggression, with the feminine—feeling and love, within an individual. In this story of psychic destruction, Oedipus fails to achieve such union. Abandoned by his parents, he unwittingly both kills his father and marries his mother, consequently blinding himself and wandering through life immersed in sorrow.

For most mid-life males, usually having sided, as a child with the 'father' after separating from the 'mother', the feminine, or anima—evident in feelings and moods—now takes on great importance in order for the union of opposites to occur in the growth of the self. Without the presence of the feminine, men may be left in the predicament described above by Bly. Without the masculine, the result is blindness—reduced 'conscious awareness of both our inner and outer worlds' (O'Connor, 1993, p. 21).



Figure 6, Barbieri, Italy

and dirty but I use to love going to this room because it had so many interesting things to look at. There was an old barber's chair in the corner and hard up against it an old timber desk with newspapers and things strewn on top of it. And near the edge of the table against the wall was an old timber-framed cabinet with glass top, sides and door. On the door a painted red cross, and inside the cabinet were all these things: the clippers, razors and cut-throat, brush, soap, and a bottle of coloured fragrance. And hanging on the edge of the chair was a leather sharpening strap. I remember this room, which was dusty and softly lit, as the hidden room of discovery.

There is something that European men of the past generation used to do that they no longer do—a value thing for themselves perhaps? What does the new generation do? Will they be looking for something in the future? Why I say 'European' is because the Aussie male never inhabits a 'Continental Barber'—a place where men sat in calm space, and were pampered. Not the pub! I could imagine the feelings and smell of the talk and fragrances as the face was being lathered and shaved, scalp massaged and then walking out totally fresh and relaxed—this done as a ritual every week or every couple of weeks, not like a haircut every few months. In fact, come to think of it, I have never given myself the occasion or permission to have this ritual of self-pampering from a male perspective.

None of my mates do it. My dad used to as a young man. I'm not sure—I'll ask him—where did we lose this? Or where was it not passed down from our elders to groom, sit and relax? Women do it and are trained and encouraged to. Business women do it. Housewives with children do it. I think men want to do it, however they have forgotten and don't know how to create it. Are men embarrassed?

I haven't experienced going

In Sam's case, he describes his own change in attitude:

I got in touch with his pain, with his upsets and his experiences around him as a child. And that's when it hit me, and I found that humanity for my father.

Proposed here is that within the realm of Sam's visual, written and oral "hair-story"—the drive for reconciliation with his father—a separation symbolised by the father's projected demand for very short hair; together with the engagement with his feminine—evident in the feelings and moods experienced in the domain of photographing barbershops, the recollection of sensual, pleasurable memories of discovery, and his desire for nurturing—a transformation has occurred which indicates strong signs of achieving Jung's 'transition from one attitude to another organically' (1969, p. 73). Indeed, according to Hershkowitz (1989), 'for Jung the creative act involves the fusion of the animus and anima' (p. 74).

It is when this 'connectedness and separateness' can be held concurrently, that a 'psychological child...of wholeness and self' is born (O'Connor, 1993, p. 21). Drawing on object relations theory in connection to this phenomenon, O'Connor quotes Britton, a contemporary psychoanalyst, who states that:

If the link between the parents perceived in love and hate can be tolerated in the child's mind, it provides him with a prototype for an object relationship of a third kind in which he is a witness and not a participant. A third position then comes into existence from which the object relationships can be observed...This provides us with the capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves (Britten quoted in O'Connor, 1993, p. 22).

Remembering that mid-life provides an opportunity to resolve cumulative, residual childhood and adolescent issues, the proposition put forward here is that Sam's engagement with embodied psychic images in the form of photographs and written memories has created a domain, a transitional space in which to reflect upon 'the experience of struggling to hold contradictory thoughts together long enough for the creative third to occur, which so often synthesises the other two' (O'Connor, 1993, p. 21), resulting, in Sam's case, in inner transformation.

With regard to conditions encouraging the formation of a transitional space in which creative imagination is active—non-compliance and freedom,

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 7, Barbieri, Italy

into a barbershop, sitting down and having a shave. I thought about it, I haven't taken action. I'd like to invite my dad or my friend—let's go to a barbershop, sit down and have a shave. I know I have invited some friends to go to some weird things—you do it with your mates— some things that are really interesting and in secret sometimes. But to sit down, chill out, might have a shave, it could be a way of taking time out together and being looked after. It's something to experience, I guess its kinda weird being looked after by another man, groomed by another man. I think that's the nurturing. Man to man expressing that male nurturing. It's about self awareness, loving oneself enough to take care of the body, the way it looks, the way you present yourself to other people. It honours the other person as well as honours yourself.

When I go out [to photograph] it has value to me and I am not putting any weight that has value to anyone else. I am doing it purely for myself. I enjoy doing it and I think that is the value because I don't really care if anyone likes it or dislikes it or has an opinion. I don't care. It's relaxing, it provides time for me to think about what we've discussed and it's opened up opportunities for conversations or other things. I actually stopped at a barbershop on Lonsdale Street run by a young guy in his early to mid 30s and I asked him, "Why are you running a barbershop?" He said, "Well its great. It's like a community. You need community."

We had a really good conversation, I was there for probably half an hour discussing a number of things, and he was just really open to having a conversation. We didn't talk about sports or cars, we just talked about what we do and what we're up to. It was great, positive, two human beings from different worlds come together.

What I got out of it this process was something deeper than I anticipated. It was compassion

spontaneity, and playfulness—these appear to have been met, according to Sam's self-observation:

When I go out [to photograph] it has value to me and I am not putting any weight that has value to anyone else. I am doing it purely for myself. I enjoy doing it and I think that is the value because I don't really care if anyone likes it or dislikes it or has an opinion. I don't care. It's relaxing, it provides time for me to think about what we've discussed and it's opened up opportunities for conversations or other things. It's been an enjoyable experience; it is mentally relaxing. There's nothing about work, about anything else, its just time out for me.

So, too, a sense of pleasure, perhaps similar to childhood feelings of soothing, nurturing and harmony is apparent. This notion certainly may be seen to correlate with the idea of art as transitional object.

Another issue, the sense of isolation experienced by Australian mid-life males, as well as being a social issue, may also be seen in relation to mid-life male psychological development. Farouque (2005), in her recent newspaper article, *The solitary confinement of the Aussie bloke*, quotes a mid-life Australian male, John, as saying: "Most people just don't want to hear what is going on inside my head." Sam's statement about his barbershop photographs, that "I've never told anyone, except my wife, until this point", demonstrates his hesitation in sharing with others the inner meaning of his fascination. He also contrasts his perception of Aussie pub culture dramatically with the "calm space" of the 'European' barbershop, implying a lack of genuine sharing within wider Australian male culture. This 'European' theme is also raised by another participant.

Biddulph (1994) says that 'All men need the help of other men to complete certain transitions, as well as just having a warm, relaxed life' (p. 14). Sam's expressed desire to share, with his father or a friend, masculine nurturing in terms of the ritual of grooming and conversation, may be evidence of this need:

to sit down, chill out, might have a shave, it could be a way of taking time out together and being looked after. It's something to experience, I guess its kinda weird being looked after by another man, groomed by another man... Man to man expressing that male nurturing. It's about self awareness, loving oneself enough to take care of the body, the way it looks, the way you present yourself to other people. It honours the other person as well as honours yourself.

On another level, conceivably reminiscent of his childhood, Sam's desire for self-pampering might also



Figure 8, Barbieri, Italy

for who my father is. So I started looking back and as a kid I ended up hating war and being upset. My dad was passing that on, the short hair. And I started thinking about that, where he came from, as a seven year old experiencing the fear and no freedom. His hair was shaved not as fashionable thing but a life or death situation. I got in touch with his pain, with his upsets and his experiences around him as a child. And that's when it hit me, and I found that humanity for my father.

I don't have upset, I have compassion and I feel upset through my compassion. I'm not angry, I'm just like 'Wow!' What people had to go through, what torment. No right or wrong, it's just people endure so much and then they take on things in their life that re-create it in conversation. My dad had things done to him and his conversations are well, let's pass it onto me, have your hair cut short.

It was like "Aha!" a breakthrough in identifying compassionate humanity for other human beings, as an adult rather than someone still going through life still being upset. That's what it brought up. It's been an enjoyable experience; it is mentally relaxing. There's nothing about work, about anything else, its just time out for me.

be read as an engagement with a re-awakening of the feeling, nurturing masculine self, described as:

an enabling eros-based father, an image that in many men was last seen around this early stage of development when they transferred their idealized love of the mother to the father (O'Connor, 1993, p. 225).

According to O'Connor (1993), often 'the psychological task of mid-life' (p. 225) is to connect with this feeling, fertile masculine image first experienced during childhood. Indeed, when Sam asks, in relation to self-pampering, "Are men embarrassed?" he is probably close to the truth. In his work with Australian males, O'Connor says that men at mid-life frequently need reassurance about their sexuality, to realize that their physical, 'separated' gender does not equate to the bisexual (masculine/feminine, anima/animus), 'connected' psyche, commonly experienced as homo-erotic fantasies during the process of rediscovering the nurturing masculine.

In contrast to the allegorical rage, blindness and sorrow of Oedipus, and the loneliness of many Australian men, the proposition made here is that for Sam, empowering change has occurred. Resolution of inner conflict, along with the expression of desires yet to be fully realised—that of entering the barbershop—is evident in his words. Through the embodiment of memories, moods and feelings—images from the psyche—and in the exploration of these elicited images—both pleasurable and painful—transformation of attitude and sense of greater wellbeing are apparent.

The paradox of finding a middle, or third way, between unconscious and conscious, masculine and feminine, subject and object, connectedness and separateness, may be seen in Sam's art and story. One may speculate that the later photographs, taken in Italy (*see Figures 6-9*), appear more nurturing than the first barbershop—weathered, rundown, and abandoned. Yet what a beautiful, worn treasure it proved to be—a gem in a rich, sustaining inner world.



Figure 9, Barbieri, Italy

Harry

‘The painting is useful for distracting a part of the mind—not sure which bit—to allow the other parts of the mind to drift around noticing various ideas that occur.’ — Harry

‘I conclude that having a rich and sustaining life requires one to make an effort to get it. This effort involves the discipline to spend time with oneself. This is not something one normally does because it is regarded as somewhat self-indulgent.’ — Harry

Background

Having settled in Australia after emigrating from South Africa, Harry is in later mid-life, tertiary educated to postgraduate level, with no children, divorced and in a new relationship. Harry began journaling, and later embarked upon a large landscape painting in oils, which he developed over a period of ten months. Shown here at a relatively early stage and again at completion are reproductions of the painting Harry titled, ‘Belongingness’.

The written material presented here includes both interview transcript and written reflections in which Harry would often note questions, then answer them, sometimes at length. As the content from the interview often complements or augments Harry’s written material, it is presented here combining material from both sources. While material from these sources is integrated, it generally follows the sequence of the numerous responses given by Harry over the period of engagement with the research.

Paintings, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion

Harry’s story

Before I started painting I spent some time journaling. The stimulus for my journaling was to get to know myself better. That journaling had limitations in terms of the objective of getting to know myself better and sorting myself out, for a couple of reasons. One, it was all in writing. So there was no visual, and not necessarily any behavioural part of that self-communication, that self-talk. That, therefore, limits the amount of power in it, so it was a very soft thing.

The journal subsequently developed

Discussion

During the briefing session, Harry was enthusiastic about his involvement in this project, seeing it as an opportunity for, as he says, “getting to know myself better and sorting myself out”, suggesting a need to clarify and resolve inner, and perhaps external, issues.

Notable is Harry’s succession from self-described “soft” written journaling to visual journaling because of what he describes as the lack of “power” in the self-talk of the non-visual diary. Barbara Ganim and Susan Fox (1999), in *Visual Journaling: Going Deeper than Words*, state that the benefit of visual journaling is that it:

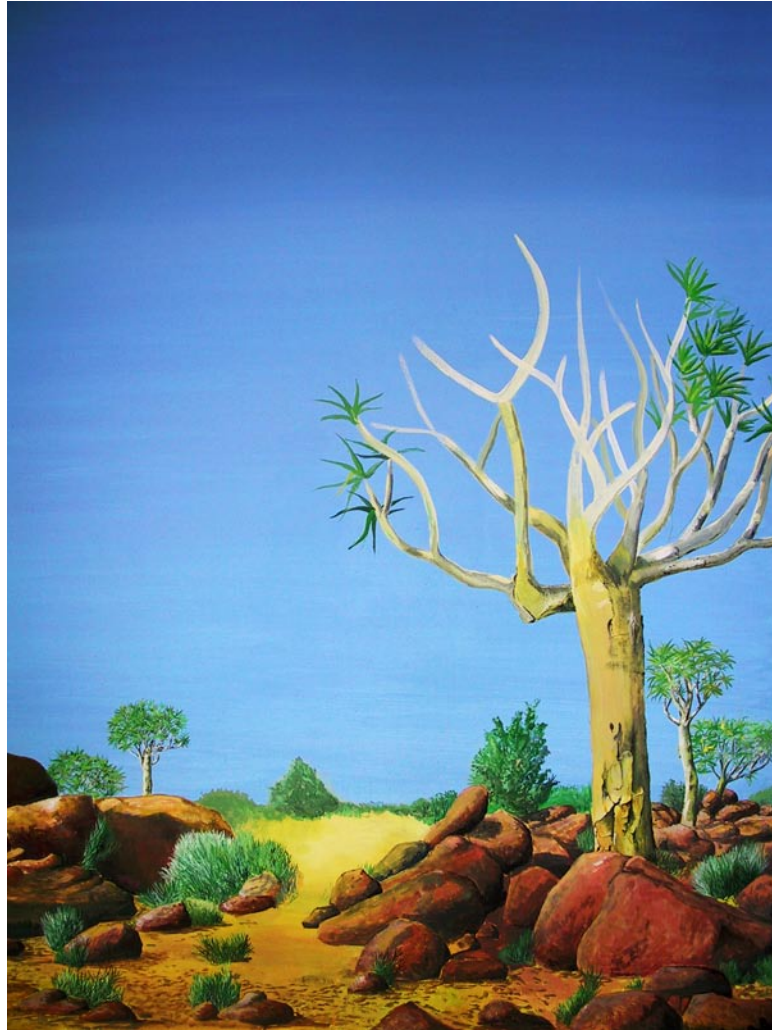


Figure 10, Belongingness (in progress)

a visual element to it. This is not only in terms of visual languaging and use of metaphor and the like, but I have specifically drawn pictures around and about that journal, as part of that journal. So there are pictures of houses, there are photographs of things, there are clippings out of magazines of various images, there are little pencil drawings, and that kind of thing. In addition to that, the journaling has gone kinesthetic, in the sense that as a result of the journaling, I've reached conclusions, and part of the conclusion is "What are you going to do about that?" Then I make a decision about an action, and go and try it out, so behave the conclusion, test that conclusion, and then record it. And then report back to the journal. I was using the visual journal as a kind of reflection and clarification.

An inner life cannot exist without it being relative to something else—an outer life. What goes on in my mind has something to do with what goes on outside my mind. What goes on in my mind is caused and influenced by what goes on around me—in terms of the past, present and future. My inner life is a response to outer life.

Inner life means to me the life that goes on inside my body is not shown to the rest of the world, and remains private. This includes thoughts and feelings in the main. It includes principles, values, and beliefs as well as wishes, and dreams. These are the firmed-up things or parts of my inner life, so this inner life also includes the processes by which I come to the above firmed-up things. These processes include all of the senses I make use of to perceive the world around me and the various ways I process this information.

There is no question that my inner life throughout my life has been rich, in the positive and negative sense. This inner life has been sustaining in the sense that I am still here and have not gone completely bonkers. Also it has been sustaining in that throughout life I have moved on, grown and learned. The nature of this inner life has consistently changed.

Mid-life for me is somewhere about the time I hit what is commonly

will help you avoid the inner conflict that so often occurs between thoughts and feelings...[and] will show you what changes need to occur in your life to begin healing from within. Although visual journaling is primarily focused on using imagery to express feelings and emotions...words balance the process by contracting our perception, thus enabling us to discern and define the parameters of the experience. Our verbal responses to a drawing can actually help keep us focused once we have accessed an emotion or feeling through imagery. (Ganim & Fox, 1999, pp. 6-7).

Harry's visual journal remains private, and was not presented. However, it appears that through the process of visual journaling—by drawing images, seeking, collecting and collaging found images of personal significance, and written reflection—Harry has clarified and acted upon various issues and goals in his life.

His inner life, Harry describes as being private and including "thoughts and feelings...principles, values and beliefs as well as wishes, and dreams", and "the processes by which I come to the above."

He also states that "what goes on in my mind is caused and influenced by what goes on around me—in terms of the past, present and future", noting subsequently that "the outer life and the inner life are inextricably linked and are interdependent".

According to Morton (2002), the key tasks for mid-life men are:

- finding meaning in life;
- re-evaluating marriage and relationships;
- re-evaluating careers, goals and values; and
- adapting to being single.

Having lost his job, changed career, divorced, found new lovers, started a full-time relationship and rearranged his finances and material lifestyle, Harry's list of mid-life changes corroborates these tasks in numerous respects, though he makes the distinction that:

There are other less than readily observable outcomes... pertaining to my 'inner life'. These are much more important than the observable outcomes. ...I under-took, for the first time, a series of 'personal growth' programs. There was a change in my focus from making a living, climbing the corporate ladder, to what I considered was participating in life more fully.

Other issues of wellbeing and development in relation to this research include:

- time for oneself to engage in creative self-nurturing and reflection;

known as the mid-life crisis for blokes. This occurred about 10 years ago. Major changes have occurred since I reached mid-life. The milestone of this change was a change in career. I was retrenched. I sought employment within my industry and after being made several offers decided it was all more of the same, and was dissatisfied with that. I took a 'sabbatical'. This lasted nine years. During this time I undertook, for the first time, a series of 'personal growth' programs. There was a change in my focus from making a living, climbing the corporate ladder, to what I considered was participating in life more fully. The major readily observable outcomes of this 'sabbatical' were:

1. I divorced my wife;
2. Found lovers;
3. Found another full-time relationship;
4. Found another career;
5. Re-jigged my personal finances; and
6. Jettisoned a serious amount of material possessions.

There are other less than readily observable outcomes of this sabbatical pertaining to my 'inner life'. These are much more important than the observable outcomes.

I think that creating art does contribute to the development of a rich and sustaining inner life. Anything that one does in some way has some impact on one's inner life. The outer life and the inner life are inextricably linked and are interdependent. My inner life has become more 'rich and sustaining' than my inner life before mid-life. So things I have done have all contributed to this new, improved inner life of mine.

I have painted, at times, in the past. I paid for most of my university by painting pictures for people. And so I thought, well for this one I'll paint a picture for me. This is the first piece, or one of the first pieces I have made that's not commercial, that is, for other people. With commercial art I'm acting as a surrogate for the client. I am the conduit for the client. In the case of doing it myself I get the pleasure, I get the meaning, I put the meaning in, I direct, I'm in total control.

In my case, creating images has tended to more express the outcomes

- the use of art to evoke and access memories and unconscious content; and
- the value of being able to share one's story.

Harry notes that he has previous artistic experience, though clearly articulates the difference between the painting presented in this research and those done in the past in order to pay for part of his education. In contrast to his previous "commercial" paintings, in which he was "acting as a surrogate for the client", Harry states, in this instance, "In the case of doing it myself I get the pleasure, I get the meaning, I put the meaning in, I direct, I'm in total control." Here the notions of pleasure and self-nurturing are evident, integrated into the artistic process, which will be discussed shortly.

Some ambiguity may be apparent in the references to all previous painting being commercial, and Harry's comment that:

creating images has tended to more express the outcomes of the changes in me rather than having been a source or catalyst for developing this inner life.

It is unclear what images, or type of images, Harry means here, or when these were produced, and how they relate to the above comment on painting. Perhaps these other images were a result of visual journaling, or some artistic pursuit other than painting. Similarly, some ambiguity may be seen to be present when Harry says, in relation to image-making that "It has had something of a cathartic function", yet "It, by and large, has not had a 'therapeutic' function—'therapeutic' in the sense of being overtly and obviously 'curative'."

Perhaps this can be explained to some degree by Harry's account of the changing nature of his painting:

It started off as a meditation, then it developed into a challenge. Then it developed into an artefact to be shown. Then it, more recently as it has developed, has the role of being all of the former, but now, plus, it tells stories.

The importance of telling one's story has been mentioned in the discussion on Sam's data, namely that of eliciting and recognising the meanings of the metaphors that present themselves in one's everyday life and artwork. "Everybody has a story", Harry suggests. "There's always something creative wanting to get out."

Unlike the images presented by other participants, Harry's single painting developed over a number of months. Though he later changed the title, initially

of the changes in me rather than having been a source or catalyst of developing this inner life. It has mostly reflected either changes already made in my inner life or been used to assist in visualizing a goal or a new direction of thought and experimentation with values. It, by and large, has not had a 'therapeutic' function—"therapeutic" in the sense of being overtly and obviously 'curative'. It has had something of a cathartic function.

At the moment I'm working on 'The tree' (see Figure 10). It's not the same significance it started with, though. The significance has changed as it has developed. It started off as a meditation, then it developed into a challenge. Then it developed into an artefact to be shown. Then it, more recently as it has developed, has the role of being all of the former, but now, plus, it tells stories. There are stories in there for me and my partner, which are not obvious to the casual observer. Those stories are becoming more and more complex and the stories are becoming multidimensional. And they go to things like values, attitudes, there's humour in there now, and irony. At this time I'm framing it as a story, and it's still developing, but has all of those attributes to it. It's kind of like, I would suggest, everybody has a story. There's always something creative wanting to get out, and people are often looking to write that great novel or autobiography that lurks in them. In my case there's that book in me, but also there happens to be this visual thing as well. It is talking to myself. And my partner. There's no question it is pure art. It's not commercial.

Living together you get something you can put up on the wall, you can express yourself, you can express issues about relationship, place, personal feelings, thoughts, my personal values, attitudes to life. So it's there because it's become, now, good enough to be potentially an artefact that I can shove on the wall, and it is on the wall right now unfinished, so whenever I get time I pull it off the wall and do some more on it.

As it went up on the wall (see Figure 11), it became a conversation piece

Harry named the painting as "The tree" (see Figure 10). Indeed, the most noticeable change in the painting, over time, is the addition of the leaves on the tree (see Figure 11), as if an enriching of the painting corresponds with the growing significance of the painting throughout the creative process.

While Harry uses the visual journaling process to get to know himself better, and the painting initially as a "meditation", the individual chaos and change that is common to mid-life experience has, perhaps, to a large degree been resolved throughout his extended personal "sabbatical". About his inner life Harry is clear that:

There is no question that my inner life throughout my life has been rich, in the positive and negative sense. This inner life has been sustaining in the sense that I am still here and have not gone completely bonkers. Also it has been sustaining in that throughout life I have moved on, grown and learned. The nature of this inner life has consistently changed.

The development of the painting from a meditation into a challenge, an artefact to be displayed, then as a teller of stories with his new partner becomes:

a means of being understood that goes beyond normal languaging, and understanding others that goes beyond normal languaging. So it facilitates knowingness of self and of others. This is one of the functions, it facilitates understanding of others, and...do we say 'deeper relationships'? Not necessarily, more complex, multifaceted.

Despite Harry's previous comments that creating images has tended to more express the outcomes of the changes in himself, he also states that the process facilitates knowing of self. Conceivably this is not a contradiction, but that in this knowing of self is the discovery and clarification of change in a new or "more complex, multifaceted" way. The proposition made here is that the knowing does, indeed, go "beyond normal languaging." Milner (1971), for example, in *On Not Being Able to Paint*, articulates that one of the advantages of thinking in images is:

that the statements in pictures were much more comprehensive than verbal statements, meanings that stretched back through the whole of one's experience could be presented to a single glance of the eye. And not only did they bring so much of the past into a single moment of present experience, they also embraced a wider range of bodily experience than intellectual verbal statements

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 11, Belongingness

between me and my partner. This means it became a stimulus for us to share information about each other, that we may not have had another cause, or any other cause to do. It facilitated dialogue, and relationship, in the same way that you might go to a movie together and you get into a conversation about, "How did you like the movie?"

So, in this way, those kind of conversations about, let's call it art, or any other artefact, become a means of being understood that goes beyond normal languaging, and understanding others that goes beyond normal languaging. So it facilitates knowingness of self and of others. This is one of the functions, it facilitates understanding of others, and...do we say 'deeper relationships'? Not necessarily, more complex, multifaceted.

At a surface level, my partner and I have been to Africa, so this is like a little reminder of good feelings experienced when there. And I am very familiar with the African bush, so it stimulates good feelings around the huge, open sky, crackling, dry heat, fresh air, delicious smells etc.

At a deeper personal level, this painting is 'clean', unspoiled by people. For me, people—the war experience, losing the farm, and my loss of innocence, spoiled Africa. The 'cleanliness' of this painting reminds me of a childlike innocence and adventure. It represents my having 'let go' of much of the nastiness I experienced as a young adult. My life today is pretty clear of any similar nastiness. I now choose to hold the African part of me, as being clean, fresh, straight-shooting, courageous, adventurous, resourceful.

And even deeper, I believe that one can live one's life based on clear values such as love, trust, joy, courage, integrity and accepting personal responsibility for one's actions within an environment over which one has limited control. The 'control' thing is around having a pretty clear and useful understanding of that environment. This understanding delivers a sense that one's environment is predictable—to a comforting degree. This delivers confidence—which in this case largely

can; by stimulating the sense of rhythm, balance, colour, movement, they seemed to give the sense of a solidier, deeper-rooted kind of knowing than any purely logical statement ever did (Milner, 1971, p. 123).

In relation to the expression of inner content, landscapes often represent an inexpressible mood (Jung, 1964). Harry refers to memories and bodily experience as key aspects of his painting. Indeed, preserving what one loves is a documented aspect of artistic experience (Milner, 1971). Both memories and bodily experience are conveyed in the statement that his painting of the African bush—near where he was born and where he played from about the age of seven—is like:

a little reminder of good feelings experienced when there. ...it stimulates good feelings around the huge, open sky, crackling, dry heat, fresh air, delicious smells etc.

More memories are evident in that the painting:

reminds me of a childlike innocence and adventure. It represents my having 'let go' of much of the nastiness I experienced as a young adult. My life today is pretty clear of any similar nastiness. I now choose to hold the African part of me, as being clean, fresh, straight-shooting, courageous, adventurous, resourceful.

Regarding the physical aspect of art at its most basic, Spitz (1985) suggests that:

Art-making might, in its most primitive, physical sense, be viewed as a quintessentially psychosomatic adaptive act involving mind and body in the shaping of material to a purpose with both conscious and unconscious dimensions. For complex reasons, we tend to forget that an artist's work is, first of all, physical work (p. 123).

A relationship between the body and mind is referred to by Harry in his comparison with meditation:

The painting is useful for distracting a part of the mind—not sure which bit—to allow the other parts of the mind to drift around noticing various ideas that occur.

The language used here by Harry bears strong similarity to that used by Winnicott (1991) in describing transitional phenomena. Through free play and imagination, an unintegrated state of the personality can be accessed, allowing the possibility of new ideas to come to consciousness. In terms of clarifying and differentiating the "inextricably linked

means an absence of unknowing. I'll explain this type of security, confidence and knowingness—

I was born on a farm in the African bush. From about seven years of age I spent time in the bush. As school classes ended, off we would go into our playground. We did not have shopping malls, playgrounds, sports fields, movie theatres, debating societies. We did all that away from buildings or any other evidence of human civilization, in the bush. This, all through prep school, high school (not the three years of university) and then for the duration of the war. Such was my comfort with and understanding of the 'language of the bush', that when I was drafted to the military, these highly developed skills were recognised. Now, the reason I am still alive today is because the bush took care of me. I was part of it and it part of me. Now, this experience is in my understanding pretty unique. This painting is, in part, about this knowingness. It is very powerful and empowering. Ergo 'belongingness'. I sense there are very few people in Oz that have had this experience and knowingness.

The outcomes of this image-making process are the benefits of meditation, completion, technical competency, sharing and communicating with others. It certainly adds to the idea of what a rich and sustaining life can be about.

Firstly, spending time with oneself and one's thoughts and conscious dreams is sustaining in that it helps one to set longer term goals and consider stuff like purpose.

Second, this reflection time is facilitated by using another activity—i.e. straight meditation is a good thing—however this time is physically inactive and can get a little boring. The painting is useful for distracting a part of the mind—not sure which bit—to allow the other parts of the mind to drift around noticing various ideas that occur.

Third, as a participant I sometimes felt a little pressure to go back to the painting. This tiny little bit of external stimulus meant that I had made a commitment to do something with the painting. This was useful to get me back

and...interdependent" inner and outer life, the idea may also be proposed that Harry's painting became an adult type 'transitional object' (Winnicott, 1991, p. xiii), used as part self and part not-self. To continue with the concept of transitional phenomena, the painting could be said to represent, for Harry, the embodiment of a desire for his idyllic past. He says:

At a deeper personal level, this painting is 'clean', unspoiled by people. For me, people—the war experience, losing the farm, and my loss of innocence, spoiled Africa.

The painting, then, is the subjective objective. Indeed, to physically 'frame one's story' is a common feature of art (Schaverien, 1989). One could suggest that evident within Harry's comments is a type of a childhood, symbiotic relationship, represented here in a relationship with nature, in which he states that:

the reason I am still alive today, is because the bush took care of me. I was part of it and it part of me.

"Comfort", "pleasure," and "delicious" are all words written by Harry about his memories, desires, and aesthetic experience. Indeed, his final title for the painting "Belongingness", given the context of Harry's comments, has clear linguistic connotations of symbiotic union and harmony with nature.

A further issue raised by Harry is that of self-nurture, as he puts it, "having a rewarding relationship with oneself first." Harry, like Sam, raises the issue of cultural conditioning, specifically the idea that self-nurture is viewed as self-indulgent, and that "if one does want a rich and sustaining life, one has to work on oneself. To do this requires one to go against quite a bit of cultural conditioning." Indeed, Harry raises the issue of projection, of "unconsciously 'dumping' onto others, polluting their space...as a result of not "tak[ing] care of oneself and one's personal needs." His thoughts concur with those of Jung, who states that:

because projections are unconscious, they appear on persons in the immediate environment, mostly in the form of abnormal over- or under-valuations, which provoke misunderstandings, quarrels, fanaticisms, and follies of every description (Jung, 1966, p. 95).

Indeed, Harry has also used his painting to express himself on "issues about relationships, place, personal

to it and get the benefits of doing it.

I conclude that having a rich and sustaining life requires one to make an effort to get it. This effort involves the discipline to spend time with oneself. This is not something one normally does because it is regarded as somewhat self-indulgent. This is no doubt a thing we were taught as kids. My view now is that if one does want a rich and sustaining life, one has to make the effort to work on oneself. To do this requires one to go against quite a bit of cultural conditioning or socialisation. I now conclude the stupid thing about how I was socialised is the apparent idea that to be useful and have a worthwhile life, one has to go to service to one's fellows.

I am now of the view that in order to be useful to others one has to first be useful to oneself. That means before going out into the world to 'be useful' or make whatever contribution one thinks is useful, one has first to take care of oneself and one's personal needs. This might simply be expressed in terms of having a rewarding relationship with oneself first. The more rewarding one's relationship with oneself, the more useful one can be to society.

If, however, one is so busy trying to be useful to others, sooner or later, you will become less than useful because you will pollute others with your own unfinished business, fears, uncertainties, self-doubt...whatever. This is simply because it means you end up unconsciously 'dumping' onto others, polluting their space and in effect asking them to go to your rescue to process stuff for you, and you wind up being addicted to other people and they don't really want you to be addicted to them.

Fourth, painting or making images is surely not the only way to deal with one's case. My view is to use a number of things, painting or making 'art' is just one fairly useful one, in my case because I do have some skill. I'm not sure how useful a 'tool' it might be for somebody that is of the view that they lack adequate [painting] skills.

feelings, thoughts...personal values [and] attitudes to life [as] a means of being understood that goes beyond languaging." Exploring the key issues of audience is beyond the scope of this project, except to mention that viewers of art also create for themselves a subjective object, their own interpretation of the meaning of an image. To give an example of the potential of this experience, Cezanne reputedly said of a painting:

That is what a picture should give us, a warm harmony, an abyss in which the eye is lost, a secret germination, a coloured state of grace. ...Lose consciousness. Descend with the painter into the dim tangled roots of things, and rise again from them in colours, be steeped in the light of them (J. Gasquet quoted in Milner, 1971, p. 25).

In this sense, Harry's idea of 'beyond languaging' may perhaps be understood, and art in this instance is an aid, it is suggested, to the building of relationship with self and another through a story in another language—the language of the soul.

Harry names the benefits of this image-making process as "meditation, completion, technical competency, [and] sharing and communicating with others." Noted, also, is the pressure felt from the "tiny little bit of external stimulus...to do something with the painting. ...[to] get the benefits of doing it." The idea may be proposed that this aesthetic and reflective process has been a catalyst for the drawing out and enrichment of feelings, memories, storytelling, pleasure, clarity and new ideas.

He concludes "that creating art does contribute to the development of a rich and sustaining life", through the effort or discipline of "spending time with oneself and one's thoughts and conscious dreams", and also through what may be described as accessing primary process, or transitional phenomenon—the experience of "the mind noticing various ideas that occur" as a result of the other parts of the mind drifting.

Lastly, Harry puts this process—embodying images from the mid-life Australian male psyche—in an overall context by suggesting that "painting or making images is surely not the only way to deal with one's case", but that it is, among other means, a fairly useful one.

Harry's pondering on how useful a tool the making art is for "somebody that is of the view that they lack adequate skills," is addressed with the following participant.

Jon



Figure 12, Untitled

Jon

‘Wow. This is really quite amazing and, yeah, it’s just very, very different.’ — Jon

‘I felt much more free to just feel whatever I was feeling, and to express that, and even explore the feelings, on paper through drawing, without being concerned about having to have to convey anything, or even to have to be clear in what I was conveying.’ — Jon

‘I found that the creation of the art challenged me, and allowed me to delve deeper into my feelings and “soul”.’ — Jon

Background

Jon, a first generation Australian of Chinese background, is in early mid-life, beginning his search for answers and meaning. He is single, and a Christian who believes that art can be an expression of his connection to his faith. He is also strongly verbal-linguistic and unfamiliar with making art. Jon’s interest in the aesthetic process was to explore what might happen for him, creating figurative and metaphoric drawings in oil pastels and charcoal. His written responses and reflections are, once again, integrated with interview data to reduce repetition of data and better incorporate connected ideas.

Drawings, reflections, interview, visual diary excerpts and discussion

Jon’s story

As a Christian, I believe that a rich and sustaining inner life is one where:

1. I am fully aware of the things that are occurring in my life;
2. I am in an intimate relationship with God;
3. I share these experiences with God and involve God in my decision-making.

I believe that the key to achieving the above is awareness of what is happening to me, and setting aside quiet time to reflect and dialogue with God. By awareness, I mean physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual awareness. In practice, therefore, I currently involve myself in the following:

- regular physical exercise (including yoga);

Discussion

Jon, speaking of a rich, sustaining inner life states that:

the key to achieving the above is awareness of what is happening to me, and setting aside quiet time to reflect and dialogue with God. By awareness, I mean physical, mental/intellectual, emotional and spiritual awareness.

Numerous mid-life male issues present in Jon’s case, including:

- the importance of feelings;
- individual predisposition to the use of art and alternative creative processes to elicit psychic material;
- spiritual growth and one’s experience of God;
- nurturing and sharing relationships with others; and
- time for oneself in relation to creative self-nurturing and reflection.



Figure 13, Untitled

- a job that challenges me intellectually;
- regular smaller group meetings in which participants share their life experiences and endeavour to enrich their spiritual life; and
- part-time chaplaincy at a university residential college.

I consider that involving myself in creative pursuits is also important to a rich and sustaining inner life. At present, there are very few activities in my life which require my creative input.

I propose to approach the process of creating artwork centred around my inner life as follows:

1. Meditating and reflecting on what is important to my inner life;
2. Spending a little bit of time to consider which medium would allow me to be most creative in expressing, artistically, anything that comes out of my meditation and reflection;
3. Repeating this process a few times (perhaps four times, over the space of four weeks) to observe any developments over the period;
4. Reviewing the process at the end of the four-week cycle and recording observations.

I expect that the process of creating art will challenge me physically (as I do not consider myself particularly artistic) as well as emotionally and spiritually.

I allocated four sessions of about an hour each time, to reflect, and draw the outcome of my reflection. I had originally intended to do about one session per week and conducted the sessions as follows:

1. Thursday 1st (11pm);
2. Monday 7th (10:30pm);
3. Monday 14th (7:30am); and
4. Thursday 17th (7:30am).

I used oil pastels and charcoal on drawing paper, as I feel most comfortable with this combination of materials.

In my initial project outline I listed what I believed constitutes for me a rich and sustaining inner life. While I desire a closer relationship with God, and to have God more actively involved in my life, I found during my reflections that God currently feels very distant. I believe this feeling of distance contributes to my present sense of spiritual dryness.

The domain of the spiritual is the subject of considerable psychological and philosophical speculation. These range across a wide spectrum from a variety of concepts of 'Otherness' to Indian philosophy which does not differentiate, in underlying belief, between the human soul and the divine, to Jung's conviction that the symbols which exemplify the deepest core of man:

can just as well express a God-image, namely the image of Deity unfolding in the world, in nature, and in man (Jung, 1972, p. 5).

While not presuming that Jon subscribes to these opinions, some additional background reference in relation to Christianity and the psyche may, nevertheless, be of value. For example, Jung once wrote that:

The problem of crucifixion is the beginning of individuation; there is the secret meaning of the Christian symbolism, a path of blood and suffering—like any other step forward on the road of the evolution of human consciousness. Can man stand a further increase of consciousness? Is it really worthwhile that man should progress morally and intellectually? Is that gain worth the candle? That's the question...Somewhere there seems to be great kindness in the abysmal darkness of the deity...Try to apply seriously what I have told you, not that you might escape suffering—nobody can escape it—but that you may avoid the worst blind suffering (Jung, 1975, n.p.).

In his letter is given advice to avoid the 'worst blind suffering', conceivably like that of the mythical Oedipus and many mid-life males. Similarities may also be seen to exist between the 'great kindness in the abysmal darkness of the deity' and the writings of Christian mystics such as *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Unknown & Johnston, 1973), and *Dark Night of the Soul* (John of the Cross, 1990). The fifteenth century St John writes:

Into this dark night souls begin to enter when God draws them forth from the state of beginners—which is the state of those that meditate on the spiritual road—and begins to set them in the state of progressives (proficient)—which is that of those who are already contemplatives—to the end that, after passing through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the Divine union of the soul with God. Wherefore, to the end that we might better understand and explain what night is this through which the soul passes, and for which cause God sets it therein...(John of the Cross, 1990, p. 37).



Figure 14, Untitled

The process of expressing my thoughts and feelings artistically was at times challenging; at other times, much easier. I guess it's strange for me that, at least in the first session, I found it really difficult because I don't normally express myself in this way. I mean, I'm much more a person of words, probably more so than your average person. So just to try and draw something or to even sort of think in a completely different way—and for some reason I felt initially, I don't know, to me it was almost like a communication, but over time I just sort of realised, 'No, actually the artwork itself doesn't need to [communicate].' The production in itself doesn't have to mean anything or convey anything to anyone, which took me a little while to hear, to get my head around, but yeah, it was something that really struck me.

For the first drawing (See Figure 12) I had just finished dinner after yoga. Feeling tired and a little bit sore, but very happy. Listening to dance music. Appreciating importance of quiet time to myself. Had not wanted to be bothered tonight, not wanted to talk to anyone. Enjoyed the artwork. Very different sensation and textures applying the pastels and charcoal to the paper. Seeing the different effects I could create. The image came very easily—I often think of visualistic 'soundscapes' when I listen to music. Listening to music enhances my ability to connect with my emotions. Generally, in my work, I have little chance to appreciate feelings, so music is a key source of emotional outlet. Feelings of elation, anger, freedom, sadness, and longing. The sense that somewhere at the heart of the music, is God, as if God is actually music, or the source of the music.

The second image (see Figure 13) is sort of an extension of the first. I like dancing—makes me feel part of the music—as if I am in union with the music. Gives me a very strong sense

Again, while not suggesting that Jon holds these views of the 'dark night of the soul' in relation to 'union of the soul with God', he reflects that:

While I desire a closer relationship with God, and to have God more actively involved in my life, I found during my reflections that God currently feels very distant...contribut[ing] to my present sense of spiritual dryness.

Jon also expresses a yearning for "creative pursuits" in his life, making a direct link between creativity and a rich inner life. How similar these comments sound to Kipnis' (1991) observation that men often feel detached from feelings of spiritual aliveness, and that a 'work of uncovering' (p. 17), of delving feelings, is needed in order to rekindle creativity. Jon's creative desire also seems consistent with Winnicott's (1991) belief that 'creative apperception' (p. 65)—the assimilation of new ideas or attitudes in relation to earlier awareness, for instance—is pivotal to feeling that life is worthwhile. Jon says:

I think that most of my life, ...and probably most of us what we do is *kind* of communicate, interact in some way, but it's not much that is done. There are not that many activities I do that are for myself, and I think that's about a sustaining inner life.

Indeed, Jon's enthusiastic involvement in creating embodied psychic images may be seen to correlate with Winnicott's idea that most people realise, tantalizingly, that their lives are lacking in creativity.

Jon suggests that he is highly verbal-linguistic, one of Gardner's (1993) eight categories of 'multiple intelligence'¹ which also include the body-kinesthetic,² musical and intrapersonal³ categories, each of relevance in this case. In their experience with visual journaling, Ganim and Fox compare verbal and visual language:

Our own recognition that imagery is a language inherent in each individual was verified by our findings: imagery is the body-mind's first or primary means of inner communication. Words are a secondary form of outer communication—a method we have invented to communicate with each other (Ganim & Fox, 1999, p. 2).

1. See Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*, London: Fontana.

2. Body-kinesthetic intelligence relates to movement, exemplified in dance, sport and drama, for example.

3. Intrapersonal intelligence, of key significance in this inquiry, is the capacity to know oneself, evident, for instance, in meditation, thinking and other mindful practices.

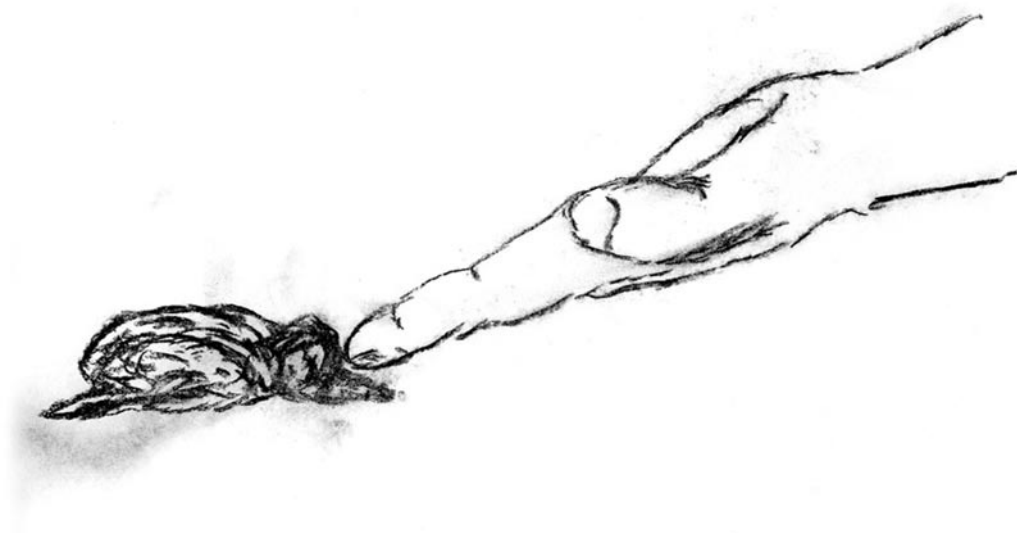


Figure 15, Untitled

of connection...to something. When music reaches a peak, I always feel like raising my hands in the air—in a sense of triumph, joy, feeling very open and wanting to touch something that usually seems inaccessible, but at that moment feels almost tangible. The other hands at the bottom are the hands of other people.

I always feel the joy of music more intensely when there are others around me who I know are sharing the same sense of joy, elation, euphoria, that I feel. To me the actual production of the drawing itself became kind of an end in itself, or that it was not so much an end, but it was part of the whole process of the reflection, which again for me was something that I had never really done before.

I guess the transition from something that was more word-based to something that was completely different to anything that I've done before was very hard. Initially I was thinking in very clear and sharp energies...it was like reality in my mind. I had specific images that I wanted to convey, but over time I felt I started to want to convey more less tangible, less clear things. Things like emotions, and feelings, and things that didn't have any shape.

In some of the images (see *Figures 15, 16, 17 & 19*), usually my human images, I like using charcoal. It's very gentle. I tended to use these in the quieter periods—feeling a bit more mellow. Not a sense of down, just that sense of connecting with, just sort of feeling. These were the times I was feeling a little bit lonely, in need of company, and the charcoal has a really soft feel to it and I think I just kind of enjoyed that sort of very gentle flow of it. I enjoyed the charcoal. I enjoyed using the two mediums, the charcoal and the pastel.

It's funny, again, I mean, a very simple sort of image but I just felt the texture of the charcoal that I used, I really enjoyed the...I don't know, yeah, the actual process of producing that one itself. God is at the centre of things. Energy, vitality, life—all sourced from God. Generous, full of grace—God. Desperate, struggling, always on

Jon reflects, too, on the relationship for him between verbal-linguistic and visual images, and also the kinds of images he wants to portray:

the transition from something that was more word-based to something that was completely different to anything that I've done before was very hard. Initially I was thinking in very clear and sharp energies...it was like reality in my mind. I had specific images that I wanted to convey, but over time I felt I started to want to convey more less tangible, less clear things. Things like emotions, and feelings, and things that didn't have any shape.

Jon's verbal dominance (though importantly, these 'intelligences' are not mutually exclusive) stands in contrast, in some respects, to the other participants, who demonstrate significant 'visual-spatial intelligence'—aesthetic skill—so his involvement in embodied images from the psyche contributes another dimension to this project, as does his reference to religious life. Jon's descriptions of his experience of yoga, music and dance also provide a comparison between his drawing and other creative experiences.

Jon's enjoyment of yoga, music and dance suggest he is also musically and body-kinesthetic focused. In relation to his drawing, for instance, he mentions his enjoyment of the sensation and texture of applying the charcoal and pastels to paper. Regarding music Jon says that "Listening to music enhances my ability to connect with my emotions...Feelings of elation, anger, freedom, sadness, and longing." And of dancing and yoga, respectively, he states:

I like dancing—makes me feel part of the music—as if I am in union with the music. Gives me a very strong sense of connection...to something. When music reaches a peak, I always feel like raising my hands in the air—in a sense of triumph, joy, feeling very open and wanting to touch something that usually seems inaccessible, but at that moment feels almost tangible.

Yoga is a different experience again. I find it's very physical, but at the same time, just for me. I move into a mode where I'm not really thinking. I'm getting away from, I guess you would say, the left side of the brain and even though it's conscious, what I'm doing, trying to move into, I don't know if it makes any sense, but it's moving into a different state where there's no talking. I don't have to do anything, I just sort of sit back into position and, yeah, it's just a release.

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE

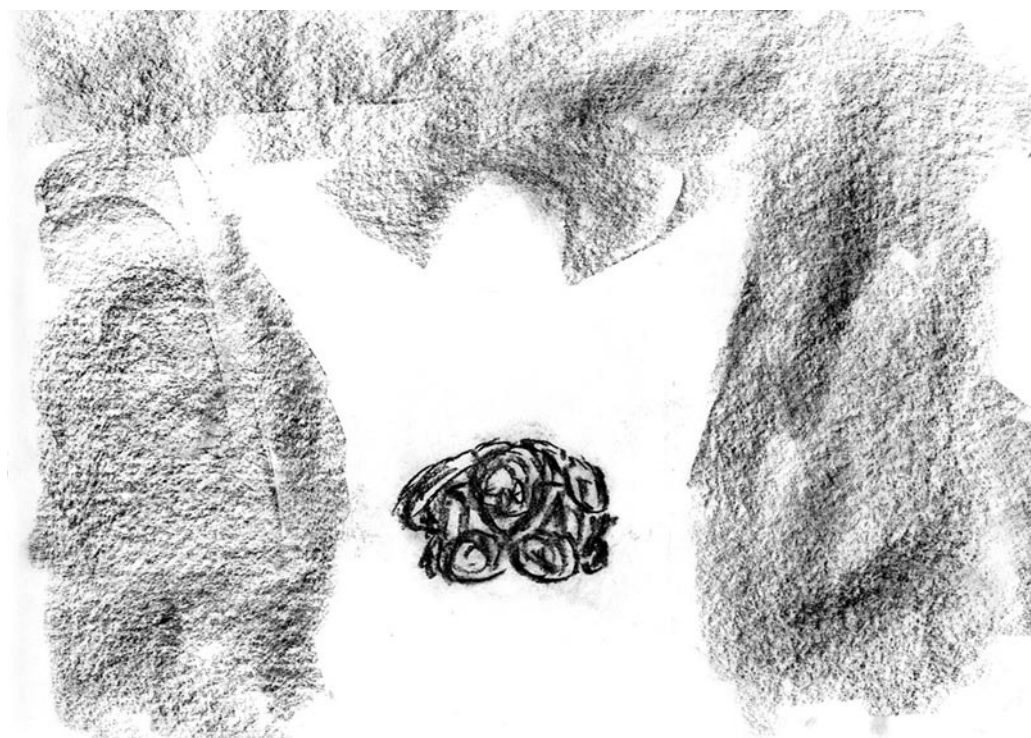


Figure 16, Untitled

the edge of joy, and despair—tired, anguished, apathetic—me. God lifts me up, carries me, offers me all the energy, life that I lack. God is a mind that carries me along just when I need that bit of help. God challenges me to be generous—to offer my hand to those who are in need of that special touch. Guardian angel watches over me, a constant companion, even when my eyes are averted, gazing down. My own darkness is balanced by God's light.

Friends who are there for each other (see *Figures 18 & 19*). Friends who are the hands, feet, mouth, heart of God. Friends who walk with you, not in front or behind—sharing in the journey. Experiences seem more rich when they can be shared. Looking back on them I was probably too hung up on trying to create images that made sense rather than being really in touch with my feelings.

There are a couple of images that I consider a bit more untypical of me. I just sort of quite enjoyed the sense of movement, and doing the circles just felt really good.

I think that's where I started that circle of the energy (see *Figure 14*), but it wasn't nearly as intense. I would have done a lot more and put in a lot more colour if it had been perhaps a bit sort of later. I was still holding back a little back with that. Maybe I wasn't feeling the same sort of energy.

I started to feel the movement of textures and things like that a bit more. That became more important almost, and yeah, I found myself creating for some reason these circles (see *Figures 17 & 20*). I'm not sure what I was thinking or feeling at the time, but I suddenly thought, oh, I just feel like...there's something inside. I mean it doesn't look much, but I like it just because I knew that it was, for me, the process of a letting go. And the colour...I was feeling pretty happy at the time, just feeling very alive. And the different scales, different size circles and all the colours are very energetic and bright.

I look at it now and think, "What does it all mean now?" and it looks pretty stupid but I think for me in terms of the pieces that I really like, it's just occurred

Evident here is Jon's sense of "release", his ability through yoga to access primary process—moving into a creative, feeling, 'right brain' state while maintaining awareness—and through the spontaneity of music and dance, his experience of emotions and a sense of union or fusion with "something that usually seems inaccessible".

In the domain of spiritual self-discovery and in relation to Jon's sense of spiritual dryness, the benefits of visual forms of contemplation have been experienced by other individuals:

Traditional methods of prayer and meditation have been elusive for me in the past...For me, painting is my meditation. It is my gift from Spirit, a tool to help me as I journey down all the roadways in this life...toward the joyful discovery of who I really am (Jeanne Prom quoted in Ganim & Fox, 1999, p. 29).

Methods of active imagination and visual journaling were discussed with Jon in the initial briefing. To draw a distinction between *Harry's* doubts about "how useful a 'tool' [this process] might be for somebody that is of the view that they lack adequate [artistic] skills", Jon engaged quickly and effectively in the process, demonstrating that artistic naïveté is not a major impediment in order to embody psychic images. Jung (1972), for example, makes reference to 'how the unconscious made use of the patient's inability to draw in order to insinuate its own suggestions' (p. 9). Like Milner (1971), Jon's inexperience with drawing gives way quickly to 'a way of letting hand and eye do exactly what pleased them without any conscious working to a preconceived intention' (p. xviii). Jon says:

it just struck me as a process itself because...I just found that it does something quite different. It just makes me think differently, so it actually changed the way that I did reflect. You might be thinking about the physical making of the art, but you can just let a lot of that other work stuff go. I don't know whether it's deeper, but it felt really different not using words. I'm thinking in terms of images. Yeah, shapes and colours and things. It's very different. It's very good.

Worth comparing are the states described by Jon through his experiences of yoga, music, manipulating clay, and then drawing (after only four sessions), with Milner's reflection on her considerably longer journey of learning to paint:

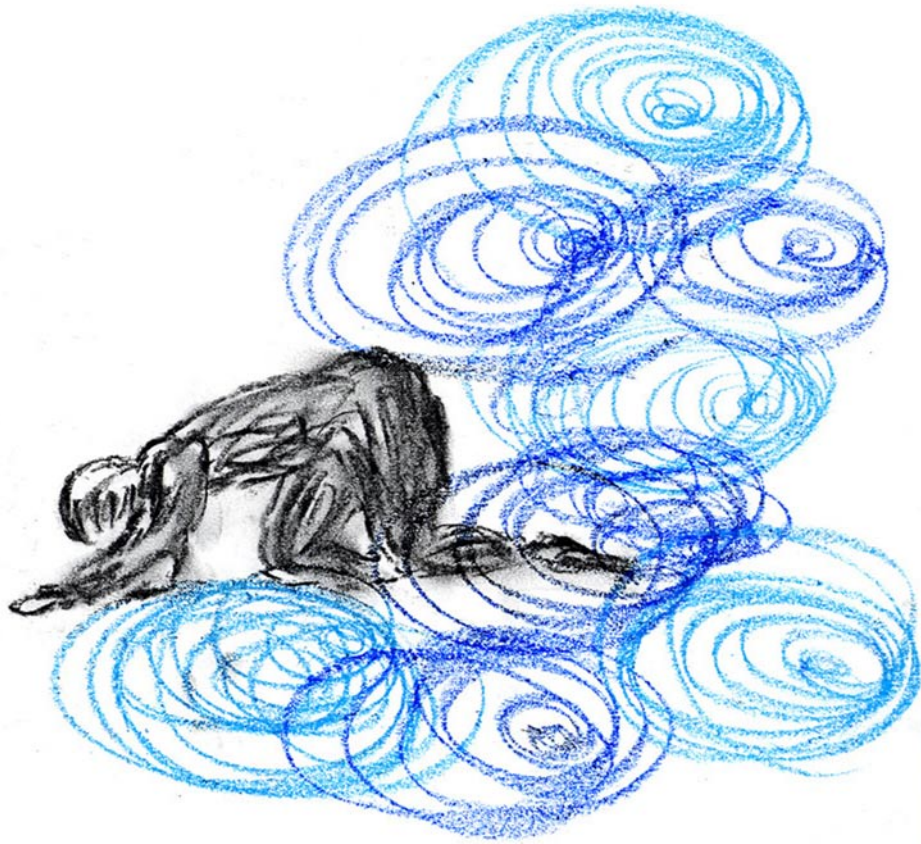


Figure 17, Untitled



Figure 18, Untitled

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE

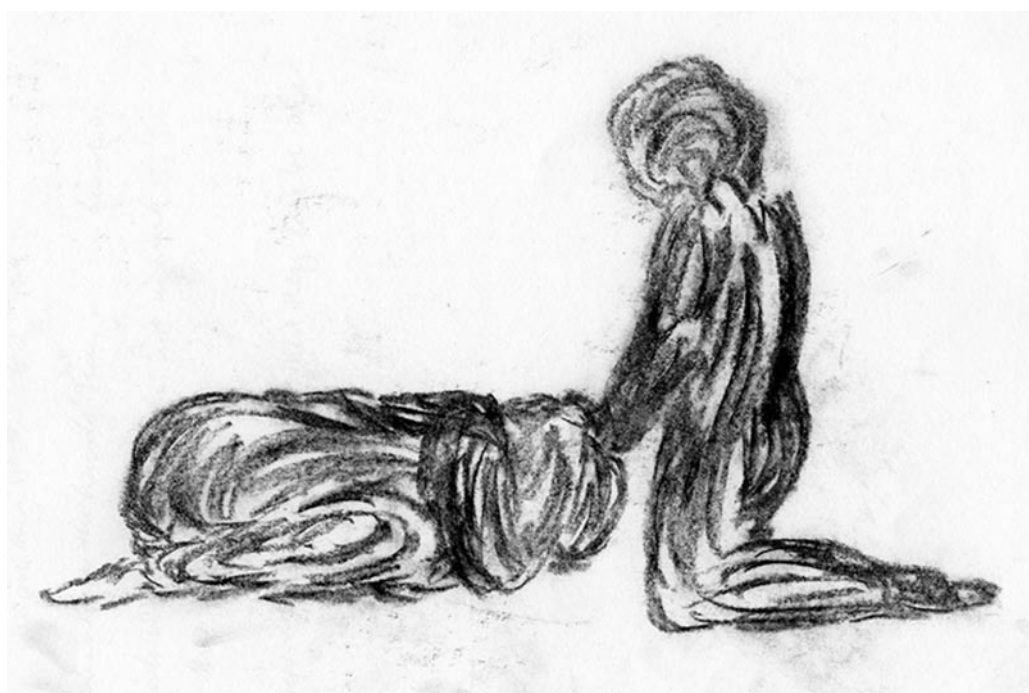


Figure 19, Untitled

to me there is just something a little bit deeper to me. I got back into the circle, which I quite like. To me just this circle was just an image of energy. Whenever I felt energy that was something I just felt like I could really, when I was drawing it, just lash out with it. Whereas with some of these linear images you kind of feel, ok, there's some sort of constraint, to the lines. I just enjoyed... for some reason I really enjoyed using the crayon as well because I could get a greater sense of texture. It enabled me to really press into it. I just like the intensity and the colour.

I just really enjoyed the circle (see *Figures 14, 17 & 20*), which was very strange because I wasn't trying to draw circle for the sake of it. Like, what does a circle represent? I started to let go a bit and allow myself to explore. Then I noticed, as I [was] flipping through the drawings again, that there were stages. I thought there might be some progression, but I find myself very linear, if you like, at the beginning, and then in the middle there were some pieces that were a bit more...yeah, I quite like the ones that are less formed, but towards the end I kind of reverted (laughing). Oh shit, I've gone back to the very linear things again (still laughing).

I think what I was trying to depict here (see *Figure 21*) was the importance, to me, of making some connection with my earth, with my reality. I get a tremendous sense of life from making that connection. And even these (see *Figure 22*). Like, as I said, I really like the circles but I was thinking in terms of very clear, tangible images. Images that I had used my senses to observe rather than, images or things that come from within, and I think that was a difference, like that image again of the earth, it's a very external image rather than something that came from within.

I think for me the shift in moving from this whole idea of communication to more just sitting in myself, that was something I found significant for me. I think that most of my life, ...and probably most of us what we do is kind of communicate, interact in some way, but it's not much that is done. There are not that many activities I do that

It was the discovery that when painting...there occurred, at least sometimes, a fusion into a never-before-known wholeness; ...All one's visual perceptions of colour, shape texture, weight, as well as thought and memory, ideas about the object and action towards it, the movement of one's hand together with the feeling of delight in the 'thusness' of the thing, they all seemed fused into a wholeness of being which was different from anything else that had ever happened to me. And when the bit of painting was finished there was before one's eyes a permanent record of the experience, giving a constant sense of the immense surprise at how it had ever happened: it did not seem something that oneself had done at all, certainly not the ordinary everyday self and way of being (Milner, 1971, p. 142).

While differences clearly exist between Milner's and Jon's individual stage in the aesthetic processes and reflections undertaken, suggested here is that similarities are evident in terms of a sense of surprised discovery (see *Figure 20*) of accessing primary space—artist as audience through the simultaneous awareness of sensations, feelings and thoughts:

I'm not sure what I was thinking or feeling at the time, but I suddenly thought, oh, I just feel like...there's something inside. I mean it doesn't look much, but I like it just because I knew that it was, for me, the process of a letting go. And the colour...I was feeling pretty happy at the time, just feeling very alive. And the different scales, different size circles and all the colours are very energetic and bright. I look at it now and think "What does it all mean now?"

Similarly may be put the notion of the artist entering into a less differentiated, pleasurable, spontaneous and unfettered transitional space, the art becoming a transitional object, exposing the conscious mind to the possibility a new vision.

While not explicitly articulated by Jon in relation to his drawing, his experience of yoga and music arguably echoes Milner's experience of fusion through painting, evident in his sense of connectedness and union, of psychic and sensate pleasure, and of being fed. In connection with his artwork, Jon distinguishes between those drawings in which he consciously attempts to communicate an idea, and those which he considers are "a bit more untypical of me" in which "I just sort of quite enjoyed the sense of movement, ...doing the circles just felt really good".

Indeed, it may be suggested that Jon's "circles" are embodied unconscious content, as he contemplates their



Figure 20, Untitled

are for myself, and I think that's about a sustaining inner life. I think it's funny over the course of the four weeks, again this whole thing of...its kind of selfish, but this whole thing of me, ah...I found that I was looking at my yoga again, for example, and I realised the most important thing about yoga is that it was something for me. It wasn't interactive. It doesn't involve another person. Same with my running, and often if I'm listening to some music it's more about something that feeds me. And I don't have to communicate with anyone. You know a lot of music I listen to doesn't involve words. It's just sounds, and again I think the reason I like music without words it doesn't involve that part of my brain. Its quite a different experience of just sort of "Wow, its just about me."

I was listening to some music and it struck me how the music is...release. Yoga is a different experience again. I find it's very physical, but at the same time, just for me. I move into a mode where I'm not really thinking. I'm getting away from, I guess you would say, the left side of the brain and even though it's conscious, what I'm doing, trying to move into, I don't know if it makes any sense, but it's moving into a different state where there's no talking. I don't have to do anything, I just sort of sit back into position and, yeah, it's just a release.

Getting back to the artwork itself it just struck me as a process itself because it forces me to think; not even think, but I just found that it does something quite different. It just makes me think differently, so it actually changed the way that I did reflect. You might be thinking about the physical making of the art, but you can just let a lot of that other work stuff go. I don't know whether it's deeper, but it felt really different not using words. I'm thinking in terms of images. Yeah, shapes and colours and things. It's very different. It's very good.

For me making art and reflecting on it has definitely affected my inner life, because it challenged me to, not so much even think, but reflect. I keep using the word "think"...makes me think it's all the brain, but that whole sort

origin and meaning, stating that "I just really enjoyed the circle, which was very strange because I wasn't trying to draw circle for the sake of it. Like, what does a circle represent?" Noting Jon's feeling that "there's something inside", some possibilities are raised for consideration:

There is an old saying that 'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere...' They are an impressive manifestation of totality whose simple, round form portrays the archetype of the self, which as we know from experience plays the chief role in uniting apparently irreconcilable opposites (Jung quoted in O'Connor, 1993, p. 32).

Such unprompted circular images are defined by Jung (quoted in O'Connor, 1993) as symbolic depictions of the self—the union of unconscious and conscious—which 'bid each of us remember his own soul and his own wholeness' (p. 33).

Here, returning to Jon's initial statement that the key to achieving a rich, sustaining inner life is physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual awareness of what is happening to himself, and time to reflect and dialogue with God, evidence of the former is clear. Jon engages in life physically through yoga, dance and other body-kinesthetic forms, art-making being another physical form. Jon mentions, for instance, that "I really enjoyed using the crayon...because I could get a greater sense of texture. It enabled me to really press into it. I just like the intensity and the colour". He also refers to experiencing a wide range of feelings and moods, varying from loneliness to happiness and describes how, through the process of drawing rather than using words how he:

felt much more free to just feel whatever I was feeling, and to express that... Even the selection of colours and the choice of pastel or charcoal was based on how I was feeling and the mood that I wanted to convey or capture.

In relation to feelings Jon also raises his desire and need for friendship and company, reflecting that "Experiences seem more rich when they can be shared."

He raises, too, his need for "setting aside quiet time to reflect and dialogue with God". In making art Jon has created reflective time, referring directly to God in his comments on three drawings. Interestingly, Gardner (Gardner & Ferris, 1999) considered adding 'spiritual intelligence' to his list of categories, eventually rejecting it on the grounds that:



Figure 21, Untitled

of reflective process is very different for me. I've done it a couple of times, like I've used clay and things like that before and I had a similar experience. For a little while it was very frustrating because it was something I was unfamiliar with, but in the end I thought, Wow, this is really quite amazing and, yeah, it's just very, very different.'

Overall, I found that the creation of the art challenged me, and allowed me to delve deeper into my feelings and "soul". The sessions coincided with a time of some deepening for me. Perhaps I was already questioning and searching for some answers in my life at the time, but I feel that the creation of the art played a part in inspiring my search.

One of the things that struck me about the creation of the art is that it not only gave me a means of capturing and recording the results of my reflection, but it actually assisted in the reflective process itself, as it does not involve words, which have a tendency to make the reflective process much more cerebral. The creation of art, on the other hand, challenged me to change the way I reflect. Not having to reflect in terms of words meant my head was not as involved in the process, and in turn I felt more connected to my feelings. I experienced and expressed certain emotions through the movement to create the lines, and the shades on paper. Even the selection of colours and the choice of pastel or charcoal was based on how I was feeling and the mood that I wanted to convey or capture.

Using words to record the results of reflection generally requires greater coherency and logic. I felt much more free to just feel whatever I was feeling, and to express that, and even explore the feelings on paper through drawing, without being concerned about having to have to convey anything, or even to have to be clear in what I was conveying.

Overall, I think that the artistic process is a very useful tool in assisting me to achieve a rich and sustaining inner life, as it has assisted me to connect with my own feelings.

While there is a good case to be made for spiritual intelligence...our capacity to grasp cosmic and transcendent truths ultimately depends on affective characteristics and we have as yet no scientifically reliable way of investigating such traits (London, 2005, n.p.).

To that end, and in terms of 'affective characteristics', Jon sums up his artistic experience by saying:

I found that the creation of the art challenged me, and allowed me to delve deeper into my feelings and "soul". ...Perhaps I was already questioning and searching for some answers in my life at the time, but I feel that the creation of the art played a part in inspiring my search. ...Overall, I think that the artistic process is a very useful tool in assisting me to achieve a rich and sustaining inner life.

SIGNS OF MID-LIFE:
IMAGES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN MID-LIFE MALE PSYCHE



Figure 22, Untitled

David

‘I drew a mandala. I had never drawn one before. I wasn’t even sure, at the time, what it meant, but I felt enormous energy and a sense of “coming together” in myself.’ — David

‘I found the expression of these images and feelings very satisfying, and the dreams themselves, like looking at a movie, very empowering over time, though sometimes quite exposing or vulnerable at first.’ — David

Background

Australian of European descent, David is married with children, and tertiary educated. In the middle of mid-life in terms of age, David recalls some significant mid-life dreams and fantasies, and presents abstract artwork associated with some of these dreams.

The written material is from reflections written in response to this project as well as interview data. As the responses from both of these sources are similar, the material has been edited to avoid repetition, and combined to give a more comprehensive picture of David’s experience.

Drawings, paintings, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion

David’s story

Thinking about this question of what is a rich, sustaining life, I realised that some dreams have had a deep impact on my life. At about 35 or 36 years of age I started to have dreams that were very memorable. I would wake in the night, or in the morning, with the dream clear in my head, and I realized that I could recall these dreams, and hold them, like a movie in my mind. They have had a profound effect.

I haven’t made any pictures of the dreams, specifically. I have written some down—the most memorable ones—in order. The drawings and paintings I have done, though, are connected to these dreams.

In this first dream I was walking down the corridor of a beautiful stone mansion. The floor was of

Discussion

For David, mid-life unconscious intrusions upon the conscious are evident in the form of waking and memorable dreams, as is the opening up of a previously hidden inner spiritual world of Jungian archetypes and other symbols. Numerous issues are raised or repeated in David’s case, including:

- the unearthing of intense emotional and unconscious content through dreams, fantasy and the embodiment of images from the psyche;
- the need, again, for reconciliation with his father;
- the importance, again, of the feminine at mid-life;
- symbolic, archetypal figures;
- explicit in this instance, the need tell one’s story, a desire to share and be mentored by others; and
- the relation between these issues and inner transformation, growth and wellbeing.

Archetypes, as previously discussed, are universal primordial images, ‘the inherited possibilities of human imagination as it was from time immemorial’ (Jacob

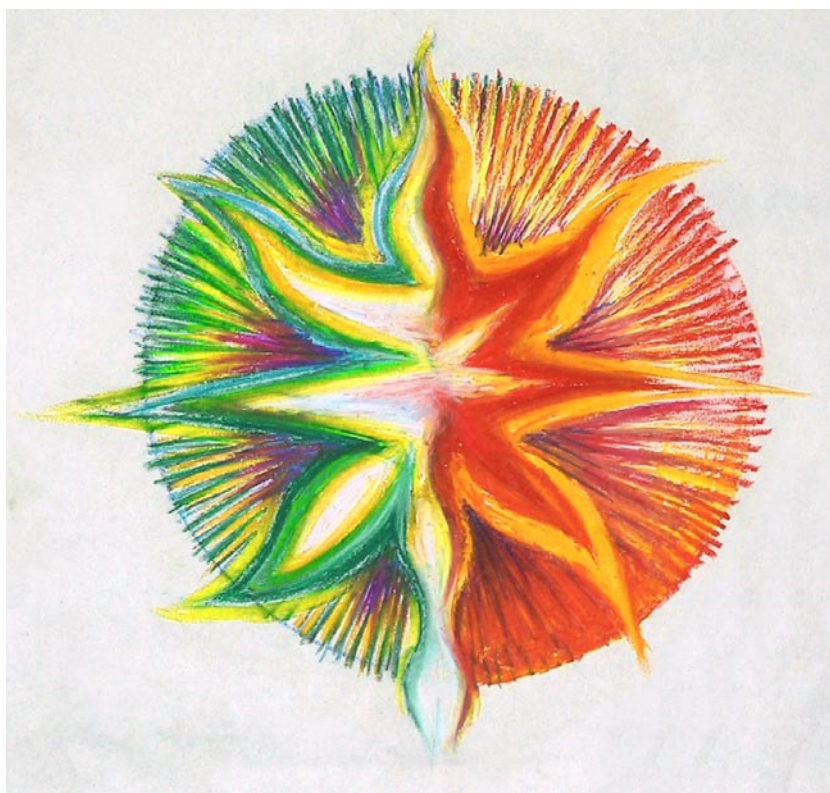


Figure 23, Mandala

contrasting marble squares, highly polished and set diagonally, like diamonds, and the walls were like polished light brown granite and marble. Continuing past a number of closed, solid timber doors, I was drawn towards one that was ajar. Pushing the heavy door fully open revealed a beautiful, high-ceilinged internal room. As I looked through the doorway I was surprised to see a small, dark-skinned boy with long, straggly hair squatting near the wall. On the tiles around him lay some discarded, rusty razor blades—the kind of old, flat, double-edged blades that my father used. The child raised his head and stared at me with eyes like deep, dark pools; then smiled. And as our gaze met I realised I was looking at me. As I moved towards him, he sprang up, ran to me and jumped up to hug me. We embraced with great happiness.

In this dream the interior of the house itself is beautiful, with many rooms and hallways unexplored. I think this is my unconscious and in it are either long forgotten childhood memories—stuff I once experienced—or maybe even stuff I never knew. The little boy looks feral, but he is not angry. He has been waiting. I think, a long time ago, he blamed himself for some disturbance or distress. In the dream he is very happy to see me, and jumped up to hug me. My surprise and sense of sadness around the idea that he had once felt the need to hurt himself faded quickly as the joy of being together, reconciled, sank in.

Around the time of this dream I joined a small group of men guided by a guy who, until a few years before, had not cried for more than 30 years, having been orphaned at four years of age when his parents were killed. It was a Men's Movement group.

I remember how he told us, at some stage, that he cried only when he recognised his repressed

Burckhardt quoted in Jung, 1966, p. 65). The Men's Movement applies the concept of archetypes to men's psychological development, seeking to initiate men into spiritual and emotional richness, strength and balance through psychological integration of masculine and feminine, light and dark, instinct and logic (Small, 1996). Through ritual, storytelling and mentoring, men are initiated into the shadow of forgotten trauma, grief and shame; the light and warmth of feminine intuition; and the descent into the frightening, nourishing 'deep masculine' (Bly, 1993, p. 6), in which exist unsanitised archetypal energies such as the Wild Man and the Trickster (Bly, 1993; Small, 1996). Numerous other archetypes, such as the Amazon and Sage, are commonly described in literature, as are symbols such as the snake and fire (Jung, 1964). Just how important consciousness of archetypes is to a male's development and growth is stated by Jung:

Just as, for the purpose of individuation, or self-realization, it is essential for a man to distinguish between what he is and how he appears to himself and others, so it is also necessary for the same purpose that he should become conscious of his invisible system of relations to the unconscious, and especially of the anima, so as to be able to distinguish himself from her. One cannot distinguish oneself from something unconscious (Jung, 1966, p. 195).

While it is beyond the scope of this research to examine all symbols raised in this material, some will be explored, quoting liberally from experts on the numerous specific phenomenon mentioned by David in an attempt to add to the understanding of his experience.

Through his various dreams David identifies anger from a feeling of being abandoned by his father during a "difficult and confusing situation", and sadness from some sense of childhood loss. The *puer*,⁴ the "dark-skinned boy with long, straggly hair", and the older dream character, "dark skinned with long black hair, and almost naked", evoke a primeval sense of nakedness. The anima is clearly evident, too, like an Amazon in an instinctual and provocative, if not sensitive way. The dagger, the weapon she uses so effectively, is a symbol mentioned by Jung in discussing a female patient:

It is as if the patient needed such a weapon...This weapon is a very ancient heritage of mankind, which lay buried in the patient and was brought to light through excavation (analysis). The weapon has to do with insight, with wisdom. It is a means of attack and defence (Jung, 1969, p. 76).

4. Puer is 'a Jungian term for the archetypal figure of the boy or the perpetual youth in a man' (O'Connor, 1993, p. 135).

rage, felt all those years towards his parents for abandoning him as a child. "How could I hate my parents, when I loved them so much?" was the dilemma he took more than 30 years to resolve.

I have yet to experience, anywhere else, the indescribable psychic energy generated by this group of five to eight men as we met weekly to share...grief, pain, and also a lot of laughter. There I met numerous men, myself included, becoming quickly conscious of powerful feelings of grief and anger obscured deep within, not to mention bounds of compassion, relief and joy, and slowly, a sense of order being wrought out of chaos. During this time I had another dream:

I was again in the large house paved with diamond shaped tiles. I was walking through corridors, peering into the high-ceiling rooms, when I came to a closed door. In spite of the brass or gold handle being highly polished, as if it had been used often, I was unable to turn it. Then I noticed an older man walking towards me, who came up and turned the handle with ease. As the door opened I was confronted by a room full of flames, and I could see in the middle of the room a tall black, organic looking rock, with a smooth surface like an ancient riverstone. It was like a beacon in this sea of flames. It was quite phallic. No way was I going into the room. The old man beckoned me to go in. Tentatively, I did. It was a strange feeling, expecting to be burned and at the same time realizing I was ok. I walked over to look at the rock, whose surface was smooth, dark, and impervious to the flames. After a long time, I touched it. I felt I had seen and touched something of great significance in my life.

I realized that the rock and the flames had a lot to do with anger. I had been furious with a man now dead, and with my father who,

One aspect of archetypes is that they either induce a captivating, mysterious or spiritual effect, or a drive to action (Jung, 1966). In this second instance of father-son reconciliation both seem to occur, with David engaging aesthetically and reflectively with inner Oedipal content, and also taking physical action with his father.

Traditionally, the snake or serpent, sometimes present in mandalas, has much to do with interior change—the subject of David's first drawing (*see Figure 23*). Jung (1972) states that in the spontaneous mandala is evident the 'scintilla or soul-spark, the innermost divine essence of man' (p. 5). A look at the energy emanating from David's mandala would suggest there may be some truth in this idea.

Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning "circle", and in Jungian psychology is a symbol of an individual's self and psychic wholeness. Here, once more, is an example of the role of an embodied psychic image in transformation. According to Jung (1972), mandalas can occur 'in adults who, as the result of a neurosis and its treatment, are confronted with the problem of opposites in human nature and are consequently disoriented' (p. 3). Individual mandalas are the result of a spontaneous, instinctive impulse, and efforts at self-healing, 'often represent[ing] very bold attempts to see and put together apparently irreconcilable opposites and bridge over apparently hopeless splits' (p. 5). Jung, who had a good deal of clinical experience with the phenomenon of mandalas, and researched them extensively, describes them as:

seeming to be free creations of fantasy, but determined by certain archetypal ideas unknown to their creators. Without going into therapeutic details, I would only like to say that a rearranging of the personality is involved, a new kind of centring. That is why mandalas mostly appear in connection with chaotic psychic states of disorientation or panic. Then they have the purpose of reducing the confusion to order, though this is never the conscious intention. At all events they express order, balance, and wholeness. Patients themselves often emphasize the beneficial or soothing effect of such pictures. Usually the mandalas express religious, i.e., numinous, thoughts and ideas, or, in their stead, philosophical ones. Most mandalas have an intuitive, irrational character and, through their symbolic content, exert a retroactive influence on the unconscious. They therefore possess a "magical" significance, like icons, whose possible efficacy was never consciously felt by the patient (Jung, 1972, pp. 76-77).

Empirically demonstrated in certain situations to have substantial healing effect on the creator,

though he had been a great dad, I had felt totally abandoned by in this situation. Complicated by the fact that when I was a child, in my family to “do your block” was strongly discouraged. The flames were both my anger and fear of feeling angry, of somehow being burnt by these feelings. Ironically, this living stone, though surrounded by fire, was fearless. I had also had some excellent counselling, and had talked about anger and how it had been dealt with in my family, so I was becoming a lot more aware of my feelings, and that it was safe, if not frightening at times, to experience them.

Soon after this dream, I decided to go on a spiritual retreat, to a beautiful old sandstone house surrounded by green farmland on one side, and rocky bush on the other; a large river on one boundary, and through its middle a small creek with rockpools. During this retreat, participants were taken through a journey based on Elizabeth Kübler-Ross’ process of dying—not that I was dying!—essentially a process working through inner denial, fear and anger (including self-anger) and moving towards acceptance, forgiveness, calm and hope. I can tell you I had no problem with denial. I was angry, and expressed it in very physical ways in the bush—yelling at the top of my voice and beating trees with sticks till they broke. And they called this a silent retreat!

After a few days I experienced an immense sense of release, and that evening I decided to start drawing. I drew a mandala (see Figure 23). I had never drawn one before. I wasn’t even sure, at the time, what it meant, but I felt enormous energy and a sense of ‘coming together’ in myself. I remember going to sleep both very excited and at peace.

Jung states that individual mandalas:

are endeavouring to express either the totality of the individual in his inner or outer experience of the world, or its essential point of reference. Their object is the self in contradistinction to the ego, which is only the point of reference for consciousness, whereas the self comprises the totality of the psyche altogether, i.e., conscious and unconscious. It is therefore not unusual for individual mandalas to display division into a light and a dark half, together with their typical symbols (Jung, 1972, p. 4).

David’s mandala, as an embodied psychic image, clearly demonstrates this characteristic of light and dark, as well as the quartering or “squaring of the circle”,⁵ which Jung (1972) suggests ‘could even be called the archetype of wholeness’ (p. 4). David’s desire for resolution of “disturbance and distress” is consistent with Jung’s comments about mandalas bringing together the conscious and unconscious. His experience also is comparable with the Men’s Movement process of psychological integration, with repressed and unconscious material including deep feelings, and the feminine, surfacing through dreams, storytelling, and groupwork.

Returning to the snake, David’s experience echoes that of *kundalini*, found in the Hindu tradition, and now more commonly referred to in contemporary Western psychological texts:

kundalini is the name given to the powerful energy that is said to lie dormant at the base of the spine. This energy may arise like a serpent to flow up the spine to the head, awakening energy centers on the way and ultimately leading to spiritual development...The sine qua non of the kundalini experience is the strong feeling of energy rising in the spine with accompanying alterations in physiology and awareness. The experience of this energy has been variously describe as electrical, nuclear, and hot-cold; it also may be experienced synesthetically as light. The rising energy is extremely powerful, and the person typically is awed by the force of it. It may come in waves or appear as a steady flow. The duration may range from hours to months, with the course being either intermittent or continuous (Scotton, 1996, pp. 261-262).

In discussing a series of mandalas, Jung makes direct reference to one in which a snake is coiled up in the centre of the circle:

5. This “squaring” of the mandala commonly occurs in forms such as ‘the form of a cross, a star, a square, an octagon’ (Jung, 1972, p. 3).



Figure 24, Sea of Rainbows, drawing

That night I had this dream:

I was looking at my own back—as an observer a few metres behind, or like a member of the audience in a play. The ‘me’ I was looking at was dark skinned with long black hair, and almost naked. My spine was a snake, the patterned scales blending into the skin. From behind appeared a dark, strong athletic woman dressed in a skirt of bright, beautiful fabric, with a bustier top of leather and fabric, and leather strapping with decorations around her ankles, calves and wrists. With a jewelled dagger in hand, she prodded the tail of the reptile—the base of my spine—which immediately awoke and sprang out of my mouth, hissing, threatening to bite. Deftly grasping the snake by the neck, she drew it out and threw it into a furnace through an arched window in a stone wall. After the initial shock, I reached unharmed into the flames and pulled out the now benign reptile.

I’m sure this snake is connected to the mandala. See the wiggly line up the centre?

The next day I spoke to my ‘guide’ on the retreat. I remember her explaining, “This woman in your dream is your ‘unknown woman’—your anima.” I was amazed. That day I drew my impression of the fabric of the woman with the dagger (see Figure 24). Her skirt was like translucent layers, the colours shifting and blending as the fabric moved. The drawing has turned out quite different from the image in my mind. It captures the vibrancy and energy, but not the movement of the shifting layers, though I can still picture these in my mind.

I also remembered, in speaking to my guide, that throughout much of this period I had often had a wise, old red Indian man in my dreams. Though he had often been lying sick on his bed, he was both benevolent

[The snake] is trying to get out: it is the awakening of Kundalini, meaning that the patient’s chthonic⁶ nature is becoming active. In practice it means becoming conscious of one’s instinctual nature. The snake in ancient times personified the spinal ganglia and the spinal cord (Jung, 1972, p. 84).

The similarity between this stirring snake and that of David’s dream is remarkable. Likewise, in David’s mandala, the “snake” appears as if it has already ‘struck’, leaving only a sign of its presence. Certainly, during this experience, David describes a sense of “coming together”, of wholeness or union within himself, and images of “lightning” which correspond to comments by Jung and Scotton, respectively, regarding mandalas and kundalini. Indeed, Jung (1972) states that ‘Lightning signifies a sudden, unexpected, and overpowering change of psychic condition’ (p. 11).

Interestingly, while the woman in the dream appears instinctive and takes incendiary action, David focuses, in his drawing and painting (see Figures 24 & 25), on the ‘softer’ feature of the fabric of her skirt—“colours shifting and blending as the fabric moved...vibrancy and energy”. Jung (1972) observed that vibrant colours appear to invite the unconscious.

An important issue for a man is to maintain the capacity to discriminate between his inner and outer life, to avoid over identifying with any individual archetypal energy, especially the anima in destructive ‘enchantress’ guise rather than as a valuable intermediary with the unconscious (O’Connor, 1993). While the anima in David’s dream appears to be constructive, drawing his attention to psychic change, as Jung points out:

Archetypes must be carefully weighed and considered, if only because of the danger of psychic infection by them. Since they usually occur as projections, and since they only attach themselves where there is a suitable hook, their evaluation is no light matter (Jung, 1966, p. 95-96).

He also notes that isolation and a loss of sense of humour (often occurring for men at mid-life) are typical symptoms of such delusory fantasies (Jung, 1964). The use of reflective writing, by ‘objectifying’ such phenomena, is one means of helping to maintain this capacity to discriminate. Indeed, art itself can be a discriminatory tool. As Jung (1969) says of artists, their great benefit is ‘in the permeability of the partition separating the conscious

6. Chthonic means ‘Relating to the underworld as described in Greek mythology’ (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999).



Figure 25, Sea of Rainbows, painting

and still very powerful. My guide suggested that he was a Sage figure, though I had already come to understand this. What surprised and astounded me at the time was that he rapidly became younger, healthier and more energetic, getting up off his bed, starting to smile, and getting involved again in his everyday life. I was aware that this change was occurring as I resolved inner angst progressively through these dreams. This realisation brought me great comfort.

It was as if over a fairly short period my inner world was opening out, slowly at first, then bursting into a crescendo of colour and energy. For quite a while I had written poetry as I wrestled with so many feelings and memories welling up. So when I first had these dreams, while I understood bits of them, a lot was also puzzling. The meaning could take months for me to understand. I always knew that there was a message in them for me, and I realise now that I felt strong emotions when remembering these dreams. Maybe that is why I remembered them so clearly. However this was after what felt like an interminable, violent struggle in many parts of my life. For example, I literally went and resolved the situation with my father.

I also remember discovering a book about understanding dreams, and realised that I could 'day-dream', so to speak, recalling the dreams and, in a sense, converse with them. I also came to understand that all the characters in my dreams were symbolic, and represented parts of myself rather than other people. Understanding this helped me a lot.

I decided to paint the fabric from my anima (see Figure 25), too. It was a way of simultaneously contemplating and enjoying the fantasy. It was a challenge in the sense I had not painted in acrylics before. The painting is rather tight compared to the original drawing, mainly because of my inexperience with a brush and acrylics. Controlling

and unconscious' (p. 70). That one does not have to be a great artist to develop this feature is epitomized by participants within this project, and in Milner's (1971) statement that the fusion of feelings, memories, sensations and thought she experienced in painting 'was different because thought was not drowned in feeling. They were somehow all there together' (Milner, 1971, p. 142).

Comparison may also be valuable between Ganim and Fox's (1999) statement that 'Our verbal responses to a drawing can actually help keep us focused once we have accessed an emotion or feeling through imagery' (p. 7), and the statement of Robbins, an art therapist, that:

symbol and image...defy the reductionism of words as they hold and mirror the complexity of my early attachments, link past to present and point to my future. As organiser of my past, this world of symbols and image holds my polarities of hate and love, bad and good (Robbins, 1994, p. 7).

Jung (1966) suggests that while intellectual understanding of fantasy is very important, he would, nevertheless, give priority to the full fantasy experience itself over understanding. Paradoxically, in just one dream in which the instinctive anima figure throws the snake into the furnace, and in which David struggles to capture the elusive "translucent layers, the colours shifting and blending" of the anima skirt, the very nature of psyche seems to be typified. Words connected etymologically with 'psyche' and 'soul' come to mind: *quick-moving, twinkling, iridescent* and *strength, life-force, fire and flame* (Jung, 1969).

With regard to the 'complexity of early attachments', the proposition made here is that some experiences occur so early in life, or on such a primal level, that intellectual understanding, let alone explanation of these experiences, is difficult. Previously mentioned, for instance, is the symbiotic relationship between a mother and her totally dependent, undifferentiated baby, including the infant's sense of "magical" or "omnipotent control" as a result of fusion with his mother, and the loss experienced as he becomes aware of separation. O'Connor (1993) raises the 'second universal trauma' (p. 224) that occurs in early childhood: the wound and rage experienced by the child becoming aware of the inexorability of gender difference, 'the realization that we cannot be both sexes, despite the bisexual fantasies to the contrary which reside in all individuals' unconscious minds' (p. 224). He speculates that after separation from mother, in order to maintain his blissful sense of fusion, the child attaches to an idealised, nourishing father archetype, only to again become aware



Figure 26, Sea of Rainbows II, drawing

the paint is extremely challenging, but I gained immense pleasure doing it. I would start to shift into a zone somewhere between intense concentration and a kind of trance—like being ‘in the groove’.

The background—the ocean—I think is the unconscious. I tried to catch the depth of it, visually. I can still feel in my mind the sensation of pressing the brush and the paint onto the canvas. It is a very sensual experience. The rainbows are like vibrant waves, my conscious life swelling about on top of a deep sea. Actually, the waves in the painting are far less chaotic than those in the drawing. I think this is a reflection of how I felt, painting a few months after the ‘blur’ of the retreat.

The other drawing (see Figure 26) is like cells, or almost like eggs, rushing through space. I wanted the painting (see Figure 27), based upon this second drawing, to be far freer than the first. I had to seriously commit to large, bold brushstrokes, using a house painting brush. A lot of energy and concentration was poured into this.

Not long after this painting, I had another dream which was, again, of a dark-skinned man, much like in the snake dream. He was standing, near naked, in a lush green field, the grass, dark green and moist, like a bed of thick moss, with a view for miles over undulating hills. I was, at first, an observer, looking at ‘me’ from the back. Suddenly I was the dark-skinned man himself! Arms outstretched. Above were dark, steamy clouds, though I felt no threat from them, but more a sense that they were the carrier of abundant rain—of life. And the sun was shining in the distance. Then shooting up my spine with great energy, but no sense of pain or fear, was lightning, moving freely and constantly from the ground to the thick cloud. I just stood there, feeling all this energy moving between earth and sky. Then I realised I could move up and down this shaft of lightning, so rose all the way into the lower

of separateness as this perfect father image withers.

Buried, then, in the unconscious since the childhood father image failed, is the mid-life male’s need to connect with this nurturing masculine, mentioned previously in the discussion around Sam. David’s reference to the “tall black, organic looking rock, with a smooth surface like an ancient riverstone”, and his own understanding that this image is from early in his life, lend weight to the suggestion that his loss occurred at a young age. Archetypal, phallic dream images, and the desire to touch them, are frequently experienced by mid-life men as they struggle to find the nurturing masculine within (O’Connor, 1993), and the phallus may also operate as an all-encompassing symbol (Jung, 1964).

Fundamental to the mid-life male’s development is the need for this fantasy masculine image (as is the need for the anima) to be brought into the light of consciousness in order that it does not remain repressed, savage and destructive, and often expressed as rage towards women (O’Connor, 1993). For Bly (1993) this concept is, perhaps, epitomised by the archetypal Wild or Hairy man, found in the bottom of the frightening, nurturing, deep pond of a man’s psyche, and ‘inscribed so deeply that one cannot entirely wash the letters out of the stone’ (p. 176). In contrast to the aggressive, undifferentiated male ‘We can say that though the savage man is wounded he prefers not to examine it. The Wild Man...has examined his wound’ (p. x). Small suggests that this archetypal energy:

is characterized by a spontaneity experienced from childhood, a capacity for decisive action, a positive, non-exploitative sexuality, a consciousness of a personal wound, and...an affinity with wildness in nature (Small, 1996, p. 36).

One may speculate here that hints of some of these characteristics are evident in David’s material, like the dream child who “sprang up, ran to me and jumped up to hug me.” Certainly consciousness of a wound is evident, and the preparedness to ‘examine’ it through following Kübler-Ross’ (1969) process of exploring anger and loss which, interestingly, occurs in a bush environment. Bly emphasises the importance, for today’s men, of the deep masculine, stating that this journey:

is scary and risky, and it requires a willingness to descend into the male psyche and accept what’s dark down there, including the *nourishing* dark. Freud, Jung, and Wilhelm Reich are three investigators who had the courage to go down into the pond and to accept what they found there. The job of contemporary men is to follow them down (Bly, 1993, p. 6).

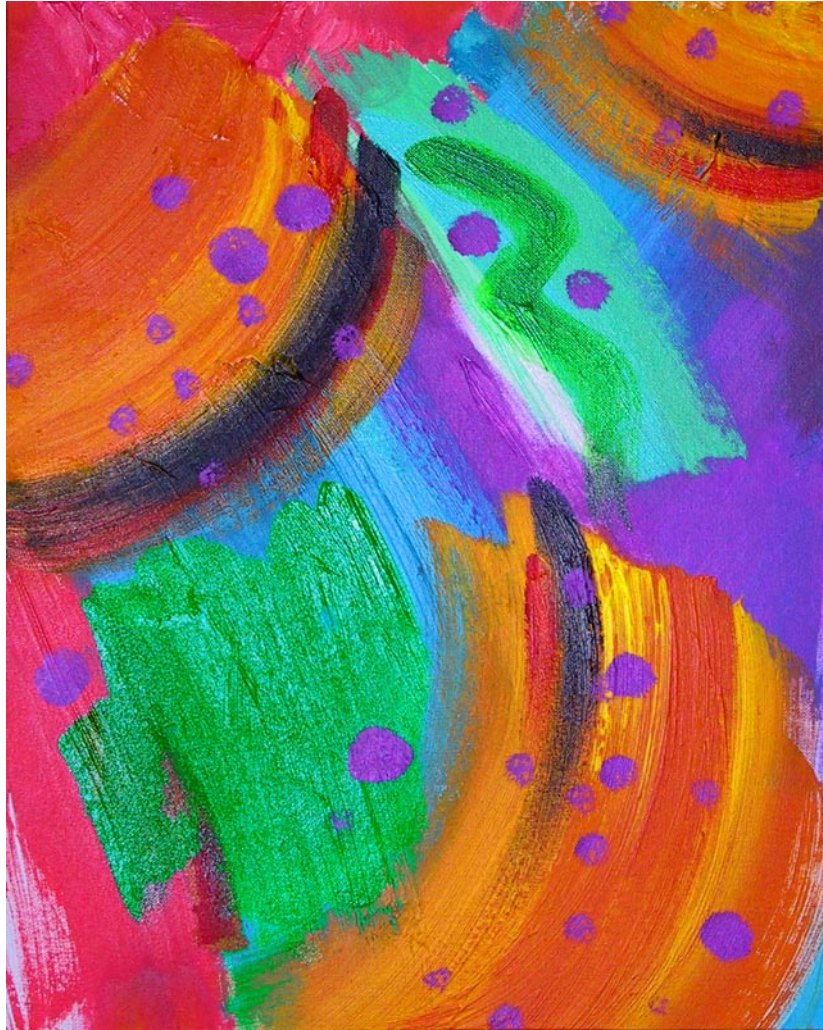


Figure 27, Sea of Rainbows II, painting

reaches of the clouds, and then came back to the lush, mossy earth.

Because of the intensity of some of these dreams and experiences, I found a spiritual director. He was very helpful, listening and calmly, almost casually, talking about these things, as if they were normal—though not necessarily familiar or universal—occurrences. And then I began to realise, for me at least, they were.

Art has affected my inner life by becoming a spontaneous part of my journey. I had never used acrylic paints before, though I had done some drawing, but this was hardly a part of my everyday life. I found the expression of these images and feelings very satisfying, and the dreams themselves, like looking at a movie, very empowering over time, though sometimes quite exposing or vulnerable at first. I am not drawing or painting at the moment, though I could see myself doing it again sometime in the future—it is so engaging, simultaneously, of my body, heart and mind.

One other image (*see Figure 26*) of David's that relates to this embryonic drive towards wholeness is the drawing of "cells, or...eggs":

a germ of life with a lofty symbolic significance. ...the vessel from which...emerges...the spiritual, inner and complete man (Jung, 1972, p. 9).

Here is a symbol of transformation not uncommon in psychic images (Jung, 1972). In David's case, embodied psychic images and reflection upon them is evident, demonstrating the unearthing and bringing into consciousness of repressed, intense feelings and the awakening of an inner dream and fantasy world of archetypes and their energies, necessary for individuation (Jung, 1969; O'Connor, 1993).

In his drive for transformation and wellbeing, David, like Sam, experiences father-son reconciliation, and through his artistic engagement and reflection with images from the psyche, explores dark feelings of vulnerability and fear, resulting, paradoxically, in satisfaction and empowerment, creative acts involving the fusion of unconscious with conscious.

Robert

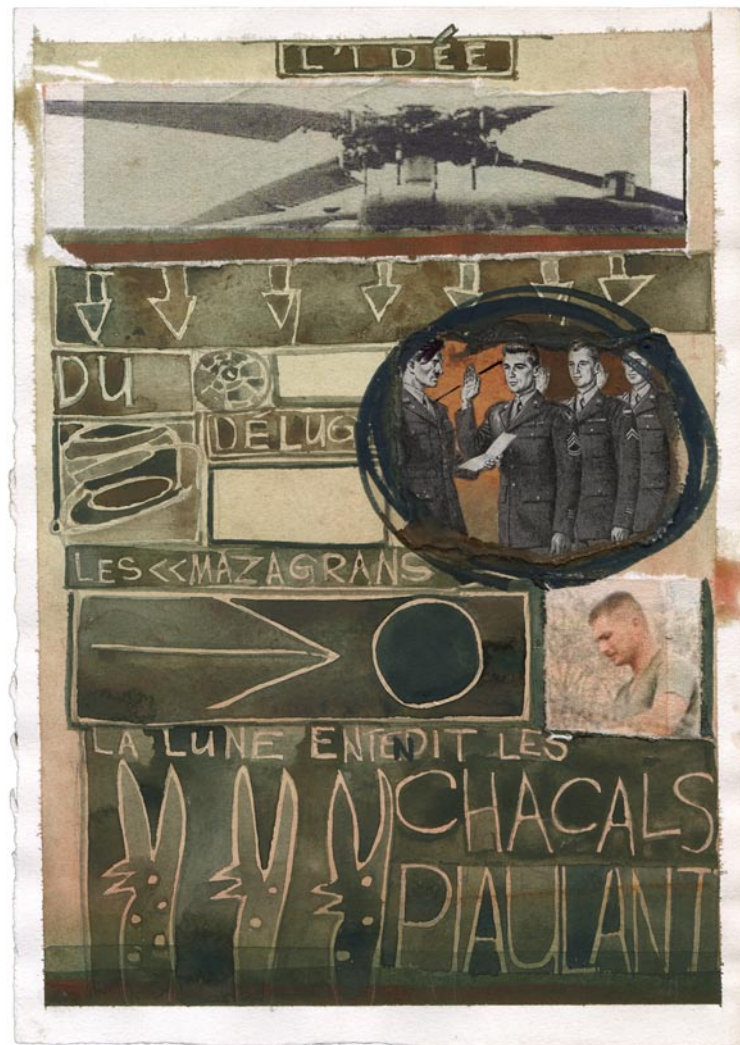


Figure 28, Après le Déluge

Robert

'I'm stunned at the cataclysmic effect of such a mundane, banal, simplistic question. I've thought of little [else] since.' — Robert

'To be human is a richer experience that one is rarely aware of. Art ignites flashes of insight that can show, instantly, that there is more to what is allowed us.' — Robert

'This activity for me is part of what would define a "full life." It's as good as sex—total sensory involvement with the added aspect of full, rigorous intellectual involvement. So I guess it's better than sex! It all depends on who you fuck.' — Robert

Background

Robert, in late mid-life, is the oldest of the participants, and the most experienced in relation to art, having at times drawn and painted, mainly in gouache, though not for a number of years. Of Macedonian descent, Robert is married with adult children. Robert saw his involvement in this project as an opportunity to return to art making. He began the process with a visual journal and considerable research, culminating in four artworks. Once again, interview material is integrated with Robert's written responses.

Drawings, visual diary, reflections, interview excerpts and discussion

Robert's story

Interestingly, initially the project was a motivation for me being creative again, which I had hadn't done for three years, but you survive without it but missing it. I'm stunned at the cataclysmic effect of such a mundane, banal, simplistic question. I've thought of little [else] since.

You pretend you are still operating at 100% of personality and it is really hard to judge what percent of personality is gone. It is a lot though. So I just threw myself into it right at the beginning of this year, I churned along rather nicely and I started lots of research and

Discussion

The issue of creativity is immediately obvious in relation to Robert's reflection that "you survive without it but missing it. You pretend you are still operating at 100% of personality". Indeed, he states that "the rich, full life is the creative side of your life". Winnicott's (1991) notion that creative assimilation is crucial in order for individuals to feel that life is worthwhile is again supported by the data. In fact, having engaged in the creative process, including reflecting, reading, thinking and drawing, it appears that behavioural changes have occurred. For instance, Robert relates clarity about work and being able to put things in perspective directly to his creative process, observing that "People notice the difference in me. ...I am happier, ...sharper".

refinement and was right into the whole process again (see Figure 29). People notice the difference in me, putting things in perspective, not dwelling on things. You become clearer about work issues, I work better when I have something going, when I am doing the real work and the real work is the creative stuff.

Through involvement in this process, I am happier, I can deal with things, I am generally sharper, basically because when I am involved with the art stuff, it is not only a matter of production, it is a lot of reflection, a lot of reading, a lot of research and a lot of fundamental human concerns I get in to. It takes a lot for me to paint a picture.

Currently I am reading harder things. If I'm not doing it, I tend to go home and watch TV. If I'm doing something, quite often I'm too tired to draw but I will research a bit, find some new articles, or if I am capable of reading, I will. I do a lot of the serious thinking in pubs—I go down to the Palace to think and write.

You move on all the time and you can see the possibility that maybe you just change it, and it can be risky, so you can't be too precious about it and that's a good attitude. For me it is. You are never sure if it is going to work or not. Occasionally you do and that is probably the addictive part of it, because occasionally it just flows, but that is usually at the end of a rather lengthy preparation period. Occasionally you get a glimpse and then it goes.

This guy Paul Valéry, I have been re-reading a lot of his stuff lately. He knew Degas very well and Valéry probably writes the clearest stuff on art and why people do it. It is a little old fashioned and classical. He died in the 20s and he has old art ideals. He grew up when beauty existed and he talks about that. He thinks a lot and he said in every creative work there is a union of desire, idea, action and material. He answers several questions which one always plays with and doesn't get clear enough.

In addition to this strong urge towards creative action, other issues raised include:

- seeking a higher understanding of “what being human means”, incorporating the hunger and the struggle to achieve a “union of desire, idea, action and material”—the integration of “mind, body and world” that forms human existence;
- the role of dreams and art in eliciting and clarifying unconscious material;
- philosophical notions of violence, reconciliation and harmony, or beauty, and the paradoxical role of destruction in creation;
- the desire for social connection in contrast to cultural and social superficiality;
- mid-life chaos; and
- the ongoing nature of the process of differentiation, of consciousness.

Robert discusses his experience of the vagueness, the hunger, and the struggle to capture the elusive feeling of union, of capturing an evanescent sense of ‘beauty’. “Occasionally you get a glimpse and then it goes,” he states. Robert’s references to ‘beauty’ and to French writers such as Baudelaire, Valéry and Rimbaud reflect, in many respects, a Continental philosophy of aesthetics, as is argued by Crowther:

Hegel’s...aesthetics has exercised a powerful influence on Continental philosophy, but has received much scantier attention in the English-speaking world. This situation needs to be rectified, if only to break out of the narrow formalist approach which has dominated much Anglo-Saxon thinking about the relation between art and aesthetic experience (Crowther, 1993, p. 119).

Indeed, when Robert began visual journaling again, something he had previously engaged in for many years, it is primarily to French poetry that he turns for inspiration. But by contrast Robert, like Sam, laments the superficiality experienced in “Aussie” culture, noting that serious issues can be discussed with Europeans “without being scoffed at”.

Robert’s new journal, titled, “A series of ravings, illustrated, in an A5 visual journal. Vol. 1, *The Thoughts*. Vol. 2 *Images*”, includes an assorted array of poetry and quotes, from which Robert draws stimulation for reflection and art. Also included is personal dream content. Robert recounts his experience of ‘The Spiral’, pointing out that this dream, “explained what life was all about and that I could relax”.

The connection between Valéry and my art, or any creative process, is that desire to do something. Sometimes it is very vague, but there is a hunger there and then all the research for the idea on what it is going to do and then actually doing it and then struggling with the material to do it. That's how creative acts work generally, whether you are a musician, writer, poet, painter whatever— everybody goes through that process.

The rich, full life is the creative side of your life. When we first started speaking about this at the beginning of the year, I started asking people what is a full life and what does it mean and that is why I put that dream bit in (see *'The Spiral', below*) because that dream from 1996 outlined for me—it was just a dream, but it was quite clear—what a full life was and how it all worked. That you live here and it was basically up to you to do what you liked, to behave as you will but you were in this process that seemed perfectly normal. So that was relevant to that question as it was a dream of mine that explained what life was all about and that I could relax.

The Spiral: A dream of a seven layered spiral which rotated at random, through infinite space. I dreamt of flying through it, not landing, at incredible speed, through the core, with a very vivid view of scenes, events, places at a few of the discs (stations).

It represented seven different complete universes where one could travel, continuously and endlessly, from one to seven, then back again. The complete 'life-death way'.

Each station is a complete cosmology, history, spirituality. There was no indication of which point in time one would be born or die. That seemed to be a chance event.

The point of the dream seemed to be:

- 1 a revelation of the structure of life and death.
- 2 the pivotal explanation of 'the journey' where 'souls' travel through

As a symbol, the spiral is mentioned by von Franz (1964) in relation to a painting of a mandala in the form of a spiral. While, according to von Franz (1964), the first purpose of a mandala is to reestablish 'a previously existing order' (p. 225), the second:

serves the creative purpose of giving expression and form to something that does not yet exist, something new and unique. The second aspect is perhaps even more important than the first, but it does not contradict it. For, in many cases, what restores the old order simultaneously involves some element of new creation. In the new order the older pattern returns on a higher level. The process is that of a spiral, which grows upward while simultaneously returning again and again to the same point (von Franz, 1964, p. 225).

While Robert talks of being able to move up *and* down through the spiral, his striving for "perfection" in aesthetic experience may suggest that the metaphorical upward movement described by von Franz is, to some degree, relevant in Robert's case. It is also possible that the disks may relate to a mandala motif, the roundness of which 'generally symbolizes a natural wholeness' (von Franz, 1964, p. 215). The psychic significance of dream images of 'discs' in 'space' is also discussed by O'Connor, who states that:

Here...the dreamer catches a clear glimpse of wholeness and his own spiritual being that one can term self (O'Connor, 1993, p. 33).

Robert comments that the dream provides "an indication of the vastness of existence, the temporality that is both finite and infinite of the nature of 'being'" —a glimpse of the 'other', and that art can "catapult your sensibility" and "elevate one's soul...to a higher understanding of what being human means".

Interestingly, Robert's contrast between this type and "the Christian sense" of elevation of one's soul serves to emphasise the significance, regardless of orthodox religious doctrine and its symbols (now established in the collective conscious), of not discarding unconscious symbols and images. As a case in point, the spiral mandala referred to by von Franz, as well as other less than orthodox symbols, were painted by a Christian.

Returning, however, to Robert's philosophical references to art, self, union, 'beauty' and 'other', these are perhaps best explained by means of a number of philosophical and psychological references. Robert says, for example, "I still believe that the production of

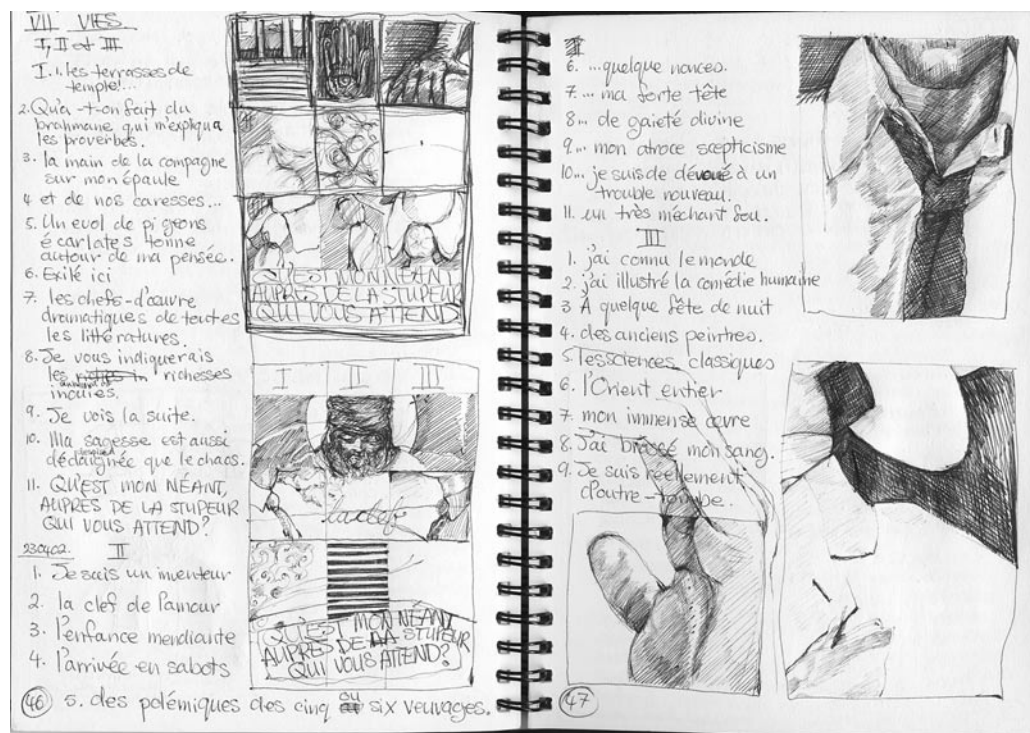


Figure 29, Visual diary, pages 46-47

the core...able to land anywhere but not (it seems) at will.

3 an indication of the vastness of existence, the temporality that is both finite and infinite of the nature of 'being'.

4 a clarification/indication that calmness, love and art are the highest, most constant human targets.

Art transcends normal life because quite often a really super work of art will catapult your sensibility to another level and that's the glimpse, that's the art effect in a way. It is beyond normality and trying to see it in that dream sense. It's a glimpse of another level and that's what occasionally creative people get a glimpse of.

In relation to The Spiral: Calmness, love and art, Art is the vehicle which traverses the plateaus of the spiral...which can elevate and descend to allow a glimpse of the 'other', to allow an intuitive sensation of another existence with a thrilling effect (off world) that startles, fascinates, can be very destructive, and cause the ruin of one's life. 'Beauty' may appear once in your life—then you're fucked. It's stronger, physically and psychologically than any super-tantric sex.

The 'point', the *raison d'être* of art is to elevate one's soul (not in the Christian sense) to a level (perceptable to humans) that indicates a higher understanding of what being human means.

To be human is a richer experience that one is rarely aware of. Art ignites flashes of insight that can show, instantly, that there is more to what is allowed us. Conventional morality, social ethics, religion, politics and economic bases are irrelevant. One is free to choose.

Mid-life is more floundering and chaotic and you take easy ways with everyone else because it is terrifying. It is chaos but there are safety ropes, lifebuoys everywhere and you can just to latch on to one and live a quite full and satisfying, sustainable life without a thought.

beauty is the only objective of art". Put forward here is that Robert's attitude and artwork exemplify one particular characteristic of art previously discussed, that of 'disinterest' (Crowther, 1993, p. 181), which in its purest form presupposes no utilitarian value. In such cases Crowther suggests that 'the most logically pure form of aesthetic experience is that of the beautiful' (p. 181).

In philosophical terms, Crowther (1993) explains the relation between beauty and otherness, raising the paradoxical precondition of opposition to achieve reconciliation with otherness—the 'sensible world of other beings and things' (p. 1)—thereby experiencing beauty:

Art has many functions in human existence, but for Hegel, its definitive trait is to answer a 'need of spirit' by giving expression to Beauty. But what is Beauty, and why does it answer a need of spirit? To deal with this issue we must recall that for Hegel spirit is self-consciousness achieved and articulated through interaction with the Other. Nature, of course, is an aspect of Otherness, and, in order for self-consciousness to be fully attained through it on the road to Absolute knowledge, the human spirit must both oppose nature and achieve reconciliation with it. This process of opposition and reconciliation is the province of Beauty and Art (Crowther, 1993, p. 122).

According to Hegel (1975), this intention is realised by man impressing upon material things 'the seal of his inner being and in which he now finds his own characteristics' (p. 31), thus creating the subjective object.

Parallels may be found between Robert, who finds inspiration in poetry, and says of art that "these emotional states are for me inexpressible by any other form", and Crowther's (1993) belief that the aesthetic realm answers needs universal to self-consciousness, and that art is the highest embodiment of this aim:

art...both sets forth some idea or conception, *and* makes us aware that this meaning has been invested in the work through the rational artifice of a creative agent. This setting forth of spiritual content from nature is Beauty. In the experience of it we encounter Truth in a sensuous form. Spirit and nature are thus reconciled (Crowther, 1993, p. 123).

Discussed previously is that this philosophical state of beauty may be seen to converge with the dependent, undifferentiated, preoedipal state of idyllic fusion with the accommodating mother, resulting within the infant the illusion of 'magical' or 'omnipotent' control. Spitz (1985) notes that this state corresponds to Freud's "oceanic state", Jung's "original self", and Winnicott's "true self" (p. 141). Robert also makes numerous references to sex, paralleling,

Art doesn't fit into that very well because art catapults you out, but that is part of my concept of a full sustainable life—I like the edginess of it and the angst of it and the up and the down. The 'man' aspect I'm beginning to ignore as irrelevant... There are no 'men's' issues for me.

I was brought up intellectually, artistically by my older brother and it was all on French literature. My French isn't all that good, but I can just think it in a way. I'm not good at languages; he is. But he has brought me up in French sensibility from when I was 14. He started to buy me French novels so I have grown up on it. If it is English literature I am not that interested; if it is French I am interested. Then I progressed to Japanese literature. So I had this French/Japanese thing happening as my aesthetic basis. So I have been exploring that for years through reading and the works I have produced. So I have had this French bias, and they talk about the things I am concerned with. I have grown up with this French aesthetic and I have only ever lived there for a week, it's really bizarre.

I find it's easier to get into a conversation about something serious without being scoffed at with European people. They grow up, they talk, they can have a conversation. A lot of the Aussies have lost it, so you have to keep it on a superficial level, and it's easier to laugh and make a joke. It's all nicely scripted.

Images from the contemporary Australian mid-life male psyche:

- a) the process of being involved in the research
- b) the process around making the art
- c) the effect on me, i.e. in the context of the original question of defining what is a rich, sustaining inner life, and how has making these images affected this.

Being involved

The production of four paintings based on Illuminations, written by Arthur Rimbaud between 1873-75.

one may suggest, the oedipal state of idyllic fusion.

The possibility, too, exists that the philosophical 'opposition', like Robert's "violence", "rebellion" and "shock", has its roots in the sense of loss and rage experienced by the infant in separation from the idyllic mother, then the archetypal father, as the child adapts to the world by creating transitional, subjective, objects (O'Connor, 1993; Winnicott, 1991). Indeed, in reference to art Robert mentions beauty, calmness and exaltation alongside shock, electrifying and angst to name a few. He also writes that "rebellion is only part of the attraction" and that "Art ignites flashes of insight". By way of comparison, Dewey (quoted in Spitz, 1985), refers to 'the moment of passage from disturbance into harmony that is of intensest life' (p. 142), and of such states of calmness *and* aliveness in relation to art, he writes:

the experiences that art intensifies and amplifies neither exist solely inside ourselves, nor do they consist of relations apart from matter. The moments when the creature is both most alive and most composed and concentrated are those of fullest intercourse with the environment, in which sensuous material and relations are most completely merged (Dewey, 1934, p. 103).

Loss, separation, and discrimination are prerequisites for connection and integration—harmony and union.

Against such loss or 'disillusion' Milner (1971, p. 136) acknowledges the restorative nature of art.

However she presses further, stating that a deeper, more primitive function than 'restoring and re-creating externally what one had loved and internally hurt or destroyed' exists, that painting 'goes right back to the stage before one had found a love to lose' (p. 67). Similarly, Esther Harding, a contemporary of Jung, articulates both the concept of preoedipal bliss and its embryonic, preexistent state of unconscious, of nothingness:

This original darkness is called the unconscious today, but in terms used by many religions it is the void, the condition of nothingness that, it is said, existed before the gods came into being. The gods of our infancy are, of course, represented by the parents, who encompass the babe within the confines of a world, while he lies sleeping within their enclosure at first as an unborn embryo and later like a child in a fairy-tale world, a personal Garden of Eden (Harding quoted in O'Connor, 1993, pp. 221-222).

Perhaps, speculatively, some correlation may be made between this notion of nothingness and Robert's self-observation that "There is a definite attraction in

1. Après le Déluge
2. Enfance
3. Conte
4. Parade

Being involved allowed me to immerse myself in...the exaltation of our sensibility, our intellect, our memory and our powers of verbal action, so rarely granted to us in the ordinary course of life.

The process around making the art

1. Why Rimbaud?

Attitude of revolt.

These poems are still electrifying in their audacity, the shock of the images produced and the brashness, that is (still) so anti poetic and anti social. Rimbaud wrote all his work between the ages of 16-19.

His youth, his flagrant attack against the current morality and art establishment and the passionate search for purity in art, the desire to re-invent a new form of beauty made his work, for me, instantly attractive.

“Le poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens.”
(The poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses.)

This rebellion is only a part of the attraction. The primary source of stimulation lies in the power of the poetic effect that he creates. Often the initial idea for a series of drawings is stimulated by text. It has now become one of my established working habits.

There is never an intention to reproduce the text, nor to illustrate the text. Rather it is an attempt to try and recreate the shock, the emotional effect (that elevates the soul) that these words produced in me.

I still believe (it's very unfashionable at the moment) that the production of beauty is the only objective of Art.

Rimbaud's quest was to redesign a new perception of the world, to discover a new form of beauty. This is the trigger that appealed to me; this is what I also

attempting to create something that *does not exist*, to create something beautiful, an emotion to come alive in us”. And in an attempt to connect this deep desire with his complaint about the superficiality of Australian male, proffered here is Lampl-de Groot's belief that:

at least in Western civilization, a part of the archaic grandiose experiential world continues to live on in the unconscious of every individual, though it is warded off, as are other parts of the preoedipal world (Lampl-de Groot quoted in Spitz, 1985, p. 140).

Similar, one suggests, is the reminder by Bly (1993) that the task of the contemporary man, daunting as it may seem, is to descend into the nourishing dark of the male psyche. Suggested, too, is that parallels may exist between this descent and Robert's statement that in his art “The freedom to choose, exclude, limit, manipulate, compose, decompose, recompose and invent...is at once both liberating and dreadful”, for we have discussed the idea of primary process, the realm in which one oscillates between unconscious and conscious, or between, to use Robert's words, “immersion” and “insight”. Indeed, Robert points out the destructive and subversive nature of Rimbaud's poetry, not as an end, but as a path to beauty. Having drawn on the Oedipus myth to present the potential destructiveness of archetypal energies, another myth, embodied famously in art, is provided by Leader:

Images...matter due to what they evoke as a ‘beyond’. They have a screening function, and even the one image that is chosen so often to incarnate the ideal of beauty, the *Venus* of Botticelli, covers over a gruesome history. The *Venus* that rises from the waves is so dazzling that one is tempted to forget where she came from: after Saturn castrates Uranus, his mutilated genitals are thrown into the sea, and from this horrific act the goddess of beauty is born. It is curious, in fact, to note the strange convergence of images of beauty and horror (Leader, 2000, p. 125).

Likewise, compare the repeated union of destruction and beauty in these stanzas from a translation of Rimbaud's *Après le Déluge*:

As soon as the idea of the Flood had subsided, a hare stopped among the clover and the swaying flower bells, and said his prayer to the rainbow through the spider's web.

Blood flowed: at bluebeards—in the slaughter houses—in the circuses, where the seal of God [’s promise] made the windows look pale. Blood flowed, and milk.

Caravans set out. And the Hotel Splendide was built in the chaos of ice and polar night.

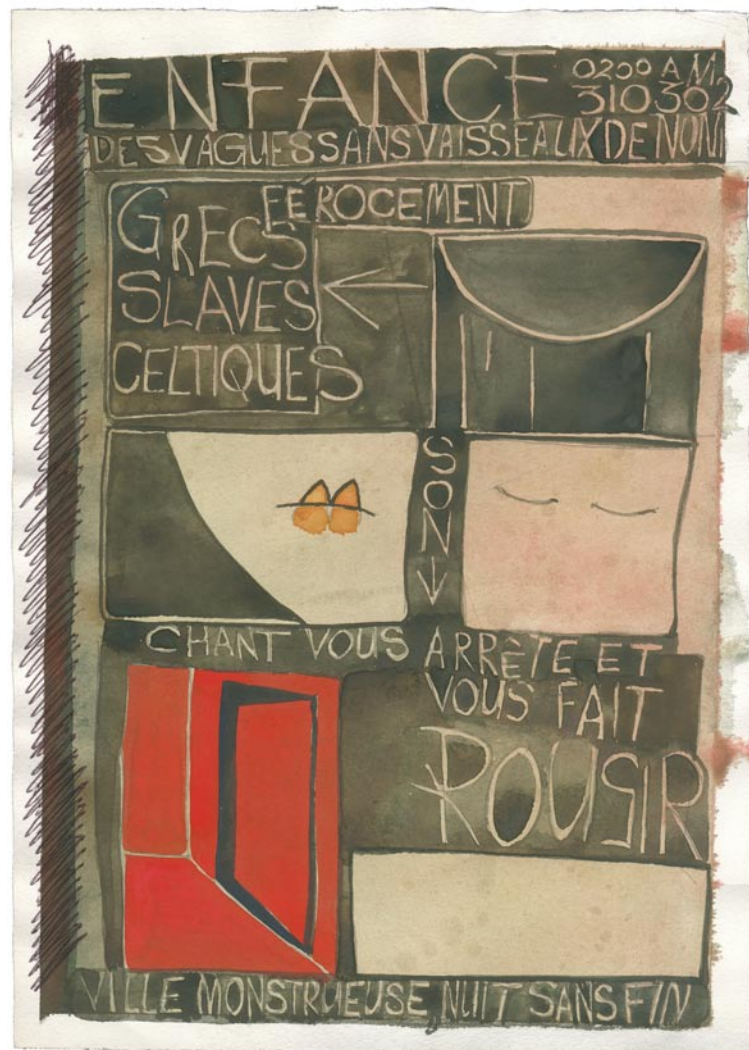


Figure 30, *Enfance*

wish to produce. His methods were based on destruction, rejection and subversion of the prevailing bourgeois society and morality.

I am entrenched in the search. Rimbaud allows me (though only a pale imitation) to move into what I considered to be (for me) new artistic territory.

2. The Desire

The act of production is a very private affair. The production of Art creates a rupture within the habitual.

There is a definite attraction in attempting to create something that does not exist, to create something beautiful, an emotion to come alive in us, to create an emotion in others. These emotional states are (for me) inexpressible by any other form. Drawing, colour, text, the sensitivity and eloquence of a line, the ephemeral vastness of washes, irregularity, the hazards of what the paint does (of its own accord) the sudden shock of imagery, the knowing rejection of what is "right", the tension of the composition, are all part of the "act" of production. This activity for me is part of what would define a "full life"...it's as good as sex. Total sensory involvement, with the added aspect of full, rigorous intellectual involvement. So I guess it's better than sex! It all depends on who you fuck.

3. The Visualization of the Effect

The gestation of a drawing for me, is very long. The endless possibilities and divergences that one is faced with are often daunting, with the result being total inertia.

The freedom to choose, exclude, limit, manipulate, compose, decompose, recompose and invent is totally within one's power. Such freedom is at once liberating and dreadful.

"A good picture faithful and worthy of the dreams that gave it birth, must be created like a world. Just as the creation, as we see it, is the result of several creations, the earlier ones always being completed by the latter, so a harmonically

Ever afterwards, the Moon heard jackals howling across the deserts covered with thyme—and eclogues in wooden shoes grumbling in the orchard (Rimbaud & Bernard, 1997, pp. 233-234).

Noted is that the Romantic critical tradition, which suggested that a work of art embodies its creator's emotions, perceptions and thoughts, had its beginnings in poetry (Spitz, 1985), which also provides for Robert a source of inspiration for his art. In the following commentary on Rimbaud's poem, Nick Osmond provides, conceivably, some insight into Robert's artistic milieu, simultaneously corroborating the paradox of the role of destruction in creation:

This poem can be taken as a highly personal allegory of the artist's relation to the world of phenomena. Perception is a habit, and we fail to see what we look at. The artist has to establish, or re-establish, the identity of looking and seeing, thus simultaneously creating a fresh, new world, and destroying the old one staled by habit. Only if we risk everything can we—and the world—be re-born.

The narrative opens immediately after crisis point, as soon as the *idea* of the Flood subsides. The word *idée* makes the point that the destruction is a mental act only. But it is the will to destruction which released the energy of creation (Rimbaud & Osmond, 1976, p. 87).

Winnicott (1991) also argues that a form of destruction occurs in the infant's mind as it uses objects to create and recreate new self-other relations. With plausible parallels to the subjective transformation of the object that occurs in transitional phenomenon, Hegel suggests that the Idea is Concept mixed with Reality, but rather than being neutralised when joined:

On the contrary, in this unity the Concept is predominant. For, in accordance with its own nature, it *is* this identity implicitly already, and therefore generates reality out of itself as its own; therefore, since this reality is its own self-development, it sacrifices nothing of itself in it, but therein realizes itself (Hegel, 1975, p. 106).

Indeed, in terms of realising self, Robert, in articulating his "immersion in the act of drawing", describes "the total involvement of the mind, body and world targeted towards production of the *subject*". While not surprising during the immersive mode of the creative process, in this example the self-other connection of the aesthetic act is seen to be dominated by the subjective self.

Some confluence, therefore, between the philosophy of aesthetics and psychology is again evident, in the



Figure 31, Conte

fashioned picture consists of a series of superimposed pictures, each fresh surface giving added reality to the dream, and raising it by one degree towards perfection.”

My notebooks (kept since the late 70s) are a record of the readings, sketches, hopes, frustrations and despairs. In these books I can document thoughts, sketch and try to clarify my thoughts. Given the historical development of my interests, style and research over the last 35 years, Baudelaire’s comment (above) of a work being “the result of several creations” makes very clear sense. I now have made decisions about materials, colours and a certain look that I intend to investigate, to take to the limit of expressive possibilities. Perfection is always the objective.

The format of the four Rimbaud drawings (a comic book arrangement of rectangles) was a re-interpretation of larger works from the late 80s, where up to 80 diptyches were mounted on one canvas, resulting in a novelistic scope of imagery and a multi layering of readings. The comic book layout was the breakthrough in the search on how to tackle these works. The variation in styles of depiction, the combination of photography, collage, abstraction, realism and text are part of my developing technique.

4. The structure

The decision of the final structure/composition comes from the poems themselves. It is intuitive. My knowledge of French poetry, of poetics and historical poetic linguistics is not good enough to determine what Rimbaud was intentionally doing.

For me it became an issue of re-interpretation, of toying with emphasis, balance, accent and visual weight, now, in the 21st century. What makes sense now? What is the current meaning of these works. How can this be retold, depicted and be relevant?

idea of the drive towards self-realisation—the process of psychological growth by which a man becomes a distinct individual (Jung, 1966). And in a sense, too, much of this discussion about mid-life males and ‘the artist’s relation to the world of phenomena’ (Rimbaud & Osmond, 1976, p. 87) returns us to Freud’s principles of pleasure and reality, his idea that from infancy we are subject to instinctual sexual or aggressive wishes, and that in order to live constructively in the world we must conform with reality by neutralising or sublimating these enjoyable desires.

Since then, Freud’s famous insights into the psyche have been developed by a divergent range of psychologists to alternative positions in which the phenomenon of undifferentiated or self-other states may be seen as strengths-based, constructive and adaptive forms of self in the world (Spitz, 1985).

The traditional view of sublimation, raised here in the context of Robert’s numerous references to sex, is that it:

is about a drive that has been diverted from its sexual aims. Instead of fucking, you go and paint a picture instead. As George Boas put it, in an exemplary misconstrual, ‘an artist, according to Freud, is a man whose sexual frustrations are released symbolically in pictures or statues or other works of art.’ The energy that would have gone into sex goes into something tamer, more social. This strange dogma has actually been around for much longer than psychoanalysis (Leader, 2000, p. 53).

Leader (2000) differentiates between this classical definition and an alternative notion that sublimation, perhaps not unlike Robert’s image of *The Spiral*, is an allegory for the ‘produc[tion of] a purer, more refined product. ...an action that resulted in something new’ (p. 53). Like Winnicott, Milner and others previously mentioned, Leader argues that drives originate from loss experienced as the child is socialised, that as:

we are taken up into the universe of signs with all its laws and prohibitions...A void, or emptiness, is thus created (Leader, 2000, p. 58).

While Leader’s view of the formation of the ‘void, or emptiness’ deviates from previously mentioned theories that feelings of loss stem from a preoedipal illusion of grandeur it leaves us, nevertheless, with an alternative reason for seeking pleasure:



Figure 32, Parade

5. Intrinsic form

The visual choreography of the lines, shapes, colours and text is within the structure of the composition.

Each shade and fluctuation of linear weight, the precariousness of the text (amateurish and irregular) the transient blends of the washes develops a layer of perception beyond immediate meaning. The combination of abstract and realist motifs, for me, provides a dimension of creative liberation that frees me from art history, period and the more traditional linear progression of the production of art.

6. Relationship to previous works & influences.

In retrospect these works do fit with my oeuvre. I was hoping for something more dramatically different. The intention may be a little clearer, the effect may be a little more focused and the execution may be a little more masterful.

The influences are all there... from Red Figure ceramics from Greece, The Genji Scrolls from Kyoto, the drawings from the 15th & 16th century Florence...the core of my aesthetic ambition.

A rich life, me and making these images

"If each man were not able to live a number of other lives besides his own, he would not be able to live his own life."

One's "own life" as a sum of other lives is totally true in relation to me immersed in the act of drawing. As a result the total involvement of the mind, body and world targeted towards production of the subject.

...the observing (and self-observing) consciousness of the subject is the common factor linking the three areas of 'Body', 'Mind' and 'World' that form our existence. This post-creative reflection, the "observation" of what I do, has confirmed that the effect of creative production does produce the richness of life. Fear and doubt are part of the richness.

The activity of drives aims at recuperating some of this enjoyment that has been drained from the body. This is where sex comes in. Doesn't it provide the best possible *image* of an enjoyment we have been separated from? (Leader, 2000, p. 58)

In this context, then, Robert's statement that art is "as good as sex—total sensory involvement with the added aspect of full, rigorous intellectual involvement" may perhaps be understood. And in sex, need it be said, can be found a universal embodiment of fusion.

While the discussion has explored concepts of early childhood, as for mid-life, Robert acknowledges its "more floundering and chaotic" nature, then all but dismisses it in the interests of the "edginess...and the angst...and the up and the down" of art. Perhaps, through his irregular but prolonged engagement in aesthetics Robert has been involved, by definition, in Leader's version of sublimation as refinement.

Perhaps, too, this is a reason behind Robert's comment that "There are no 'men's' issues for me". If the creative act, as Hershkovitz (1989) says, involves the union of the animus and anima, of masculine and feminine, then one may suggest that Robert's engagement, one way or another, in art and visual journaling over a considerable period has brought him in his journey to a place of considerable differentiation and individuation. His statement that "Fear and doubt are part of the richness" tends to reinforce this notion, suggesting that he has explored much of his dark but nourishing inner world.

Milner (1971) states that the 'greatest disillusionment, the greatest discrepancy between one's wishes and the external facts, is the fact of death (p. 136). Indeed, O'Connor (1993) says that this loss of illusion is one of the most powerful influencing factors in male mid-life. Robert, in addressing the question of a rich, sustaining inner life, says that his dream, *The Spiral*, provided for him "The complete 'life-death way'...that explained what life was all about and that I could relax".

How apt is Robert's choice of Baudelaire's words:

"A good picture faithful and worthy of the dreams that gave it birth, must be created like a world. Just as the creation, as we see it, is the result of several creations, the earlier ones always being completed by the latter, so a harmonically fashioned picture consists of a series of superimposed pictures, each fresh surface giving added reality to the dream, and raising it by one degree towards perfection."

The moments of euphoria are the smaller proportion of my life.... the project, the research, the quest is a minimal level of satisfaction, that allow one to continue. The sharpness of the contrast to the ordinary course of life is so intense that it becomes the most precious thing, that which defines me...to myself. Perhaps this realization of self-knowledge, definition and purpose is the key to the richness of life.

"An artist never really finishes his work; he merely abandons it."— Paul Valéry.

From Robert's spiral of "different complete universes", to his desire and struggle to "take to the limit...expressive possibilities...Perfection is always the objective", Robert confirms that creating art is a source of intensity, insight, and satisfaction. As he says, "Perhaps this realization of self-knowledge, definition and purpose is the key to the richness of life."

Synthesis

‘How do you define a rich sustaining inner life?’ This, together with the subsequent question, ‘Does art-making and reflection on this process contribute to the development of a rich and sustaining inner life?’ provoked an array of psychic imagery from the five mid-life male co-researchers in this project, which has been created and here collected, presented and discussed. As detailed discussion has occurred in direct relation to individual data, here is offered a brief synthesis.

Many of the issues raised during this inquiry, both explicit and implicit, are listed below. While the experiences related in the material from each of the five participants varies greatly, and is without question of great intrinsic personal value, evidence also exists which may be seen to provide potential for generalisation, as a number of issues are raised in the material by more than one participant; sometimes all. Issues raised include:

- Growth and wellbeing, individuation, self-realisation, self-consciousness, differentiation
- Finding meaning in life, both inner and outer
- Conflict and mid-life chaos
- Re-evaluating marriage and relationships, career, goals and values, adapting to being single
- Reconciling the father-son relationship
- Awareness and reduction of projection
- Tension between loss and desire
- Integration of loss and conflict into the psyche
- Urge towards creative action, imagination
- Use of art to evoke and access psychic material, including memories and unconscious content
- Unearthing of intense emotional and unconscious content through dreams, fantasy and the embodiment of images from the psyche, including symbolic, archetypal figures
- Individual predisposition to the use of art and creative process
- Alternative creative processes to art in order to elicit psychic material and inspiration
- Significance of the feminine for men at mid-life, the importance of feelings, the inexpressible
- Need for intuition as well as logic
- Need to find nurturing masculine
- Need for spontaneous, non-compliant time for oneself in relation to self-nurturing and reflection
- Nurturing and sharing relationships with other males;
- Desire for social connection in contrast to cultural and social superficiality
- Need and value of sharing one’s story—often unexpressed or seeming inexpressible by males
- Struggle to achieve a union of desire, idea, action and material—the integration of mind, body and world that forms human existence
- Spiritual growth and one’s experience of God

- Seeking a higher understanding of what being human means
- Philosophical and psychological concepts of violence, reconciliation and fusion, (beauty), and the paradoxical role of destruction in creation
- Ongoing nature of the process of differentiation, of consciousness.

Each individual in some way is seeking meaning, answers to questions which in themselves may or may not yet be clear, from Sam's, 'What happened to the memories of the barbershops?' to Robert's search for beauty. While the questions may be as different as each individual's work and period within mid-life, such questioning appears to be fundamental to their drives towards growth, wholeness and self-realisation. One theme that is common to all participants is their expressed desire for a nurturing, creative space for self in their lives. To this point we shall return.

That their questions involve clarification or attempts to resolve conflict is clear in numerous instances. Both Sam and David, for example, clearly articulate the change in attitude that they experience in their relationships with their fathers, both finding some form of inner, and apparently outer, reconciliation, demonstrating the existence of the urge for resolution on both an intrapsychic level and of the self in relation to other people and environment. That such urges may involve a sense of loss at mid-life, potentially relating to childhood and adolescent issues, is also apparent in the numerous references to childhood, such as Sam's evocative memories of having his hair cut short, David's vivid dreams of a child, and Harry's comforting childhood memories of the African bush. It is in this area that the insights of psychologists have provided a link between human development from its earliest stages and much of our behaviour, including the urge towards creation and self-consciousness. It is also at mid-life, especially for men, that these urges are great, often intruding with great impact upon life especially where little notice has previously been given to the unconscious. Indeed, according to Jung (1966), the process of assimilation of the unconscious is 'the most legitimate fulfilment of the meaning of the individual's life' (p. 205). In terms of such meaning at mid-life, O'Connor states:

Most men coming into mid-life have a gnawing sense that what was once true is now starting to feel like a lie. Their aspirations, values, goals, etc. start to have a reduced capacity to generate meaning, and many a mid-life man has asked the question: 'What is the point of it all?' The answer is often a shattering silence, a psychological vacuum. (O'Connor, 1993, p. 38).

Herein lies the connection between images and the mid-life male Australian psyche. Something of the crucial needs of mid-life development, the engagement with unconscious feelings, memories, loss, chaos and tangled darkness, are often evoked in the self-object process of art-making. Each participant, whether or not he has made much art beforehand, has made it clear that engaging in this process of embodying and reflecting upon images from the psyche has been of benefit, for we can see in their subjective objects at times, the flashes of insight which Robert actively seeks. Sam in a spontaneous moment began photographing barber shops,

discovering new found compassion for his father and family. Jon finds himself in a new space, reflecting in a way he had previously not experienced. And David experiences a coming together of himself in a great spark of energy, embodied as a mandala. In art-making, each finds some form of satisfaction and pleasure. As Spitz aptly points out:

The aesthetic ideal...is like symbiotic function in that encounters with the beautiful may temporarily obliterate our sense of inner and outer separateness by drawing us into an orbit in which boundaries between self and other, and also categories into which we divide the world, dissolve. This occurs, perhaps, with the return to consciousness, the reavailability to us, during moments of creativity or responsiveness in the arts, of aspects of our preoedipal life, with its pleasurable sense of merging and union (Spitz, 1985, p. 142).

Explicit or otherwise, the eliciting of feelings, of the feminine, is at times evident, a prerequisite for individuation according to many authors quoted. Indeed, it seems that art-making has great potential to evoke this intuitive, instinctual nature. And in the additional mode of written and verbal reflection, these often inexpressible experiences are given some rational form. Thus, integration and assimilation of previously unconscious content into consciousness occurs.

Art-making also provides great pleasure, not to mention the challenges, of entering into spontaneous and free transitional spaces, of accessing primary process, imagination and creativity, a precious experience in the process of individual transformation, and a clearly articulated need of modern man. Of this notion, all participants agree:

It's been an enjoyable experience; it is mentally relaxing. There's nothing about work, about anything else, its just time out for me. — Sam

In the case of doing it myself I get the pleasure, I get the meaning, I put the meaning in, I direct, I'm in total control. — Harry

The creation of the art challenged me, and allowed me to delve deeper into my feelings and "soul". — Jon

I drew a mandala. I had never drawn one before. I wasn't even sure, at the time, what it meant, but I felt enormous energy and a sense of "coming together" in myself. — David

This activity for me is part of what would define a "full life." It's as good as sex—total sensory involvement with the added aspect of full, rigorous intellectual involvement. Perhaps this realization of self-knowledge, definition and purpose is the key to the richness of life. — Robert

If, for the ancient Greeks, 'Psyche was the embodiment of the triumphant emergence of the soul after its journey through the dark trial of the world' (Bell, 1991, p. 387), the proposition here is that, for these contemporary Australian mid-life males, and to varying degrees, the embodiment of images of the psyche through art-making has been one means of discovering the language and the reason of the soul.

CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Qualitative study has everything wrong with it that its detractors claim. Qualitative study is subjective. New puzzles are produced more frequently than solutions to old ones. Its contributions to disciplined science are slow and tendentious.
(Stake, 1995, p. 45)

So also it was now possible to pay more than lip-service to the statement that real life is always more full, richer, potentially, than the experience of any art; because I could now add that it is through art that we can come nearer to realizing this fullness and richness.
(Milner, 1971, p. 140)

Summary

Through this research project the contribution of art-making and reflection on this process to individual transformation and self-realisation has been explored. In a fusion of ‘action and imagination, dream and reality’ (Milner, 1971, p. 129), five contemporary Australian males at varying periods of mid-life have engaged in the domain of embodying images from the psyche. Demonstrating various characteristics of intuition, vulnerability and intimacy integrated with strength, confidence and vitality, these men have grappled with many issues pertaining to the psyche, from extremes of anger and ‘destruction’ to feelings of clarity, calmness and euphoria.

Explored has been the drive for wholeness and integration, including the resolution of conflict, as well as desires for pleasure and union, of ‘oneness’ with self in the world, and achieving one’s greatest potential. The role of art-making in relation to inner images of the psyche has been investigated in relation to this process of resolution and transformation, noting that this process aids in permeating the partition between the conscious and unconscious. The various data of the participants has been discussed in the context of psychological and philosophical literature in order to bring to this research a broader context than that of the participants themselves, notwithstanding the legitimacy of their experiences as unique individuals. Each participant, in conclusion, has stated that this process of eliciting and embodying images from the mid-life male psyche has been beneficial, enriching their inner and often outer lives.

Limitations

The key limitation of this research project was the complexity of the process, in both practical and theoretical terms. Grappling with three issues simultaneously, those of the psyche, image-making and reflection, and mid-life was bound to be complex. Indeed, each has its own extensive body of research, while on a practical note, the collection of artworks and reflection during the process took considerable time, particularly as the creative process varied for each individual in terms of quantity and time taken.

The issue of self-selection of participants was not, in itself, a limitation in terms of this research, however it raises many questions if an attempt to extend this research were to be undertaken. What of those who do not select themselves, for example? How does the subject matter relate to them? What of those who are interested in alternative creative domains to art?

Triangulation, it is suggested, is acceptable within this research process, utilizing numerous sources of data and reference, however to explore these issues in more depth, additional sources may be required.

Implications

If men are so isolated from themselves and the world, where did all this ‘stuff’ come from? And why? One benefit of this research, it is suggested, is that through it, intrinsically, a space has been created for engagement in self-nurture, reflection and creativity. It has also provided an opportunity for men to tell their sacred stories.

Perhaps, in a sense, this project became a kind of transitional space, a zone in which mid-life men were given permission to explore? While neither being a physical space, nor taking on the form of traditional art therapy, a domain has been created that offers something of the spirit described by Robbins:

I was both awed and impressed by the freedom of this studio where there was no right or wrong, no instruction, but plenty of space. Here I received permission to completely involve myself in...my medium. Indeed, I received approbation and encouragement. Slowly, through an interplay between the medium and myself which felt like a form of meditation, I healed. I became more expansive and secure...(Robbins, 1994, pp. 4-5).

Here I will resort to a number of quotes, in order to emphasise the importance of psychological growth and some of the forces which act *against* it, the implication being that engagement in art may, as it was for participants in this research, at times be of benefit.

The achievement of psychological maturity is an individual task—and so is increasingly difficult today when man’s individuality is threatened by widespread conformity (von Franz, 1964, p. 219).

Loneliness in Australia has a masculine face. Men tend to experience the condition far more intensely than women, right through from early adulthood to old age, a study suggests. This gender gap peaks when males hit mid-life. From 35 to 44 they feel the most isolated from

friends and other supports, especially if they live alone. These feelings persist right up to their 70s (Farouque, 2005).

I unconsciously considered art a woman's leisure pursuit—not only because the positivist patriarchal milieu of my high school mandated a hegemony of the hard sciences and “hard body” sports but also because my mother was an artist, and my younger brothers and I were sometimes embarrassed by the huge life drawings of plump naked women hanging in our home (Slattery, 2001, p. 371).

The suggestion here is not that art is a cure-all, nor that ‘unrelenting self-examination [is] a proviso for each life to be worthwhile’ (Flanagan, 2000, p. 43). According to Moon (2002), ‘to study the self does not mean ruthless self-analysis. Empathy and sensitivity work much better’ (p. 57). Here, instead, is the proposition that engaging in art-making can provide an opportunity for self-exploration, engagement and enjoyment, even the possibility of experiencing beauty.

Recommendations for further research

A number of possibilities for further research exist. For example, a longitudinal study of the same participants could be undertaken, or the research could be expanded to be more inclusive of age and gender. It could also be expanded to include practising artists and art therapists, for instance, to bring more sources of data and viewpoints. Or the investigation into alternative creative forms such as the poetry of mid-life males could be undertaken and compared with the results of using art.

The exhibition of this work, placing it in the public domain in order to investigate responses to the images of the contemporary Australian mid-life male, may be valuable. On this note, the conjunction between philosophical and psychological discussion on art and audience could be investigated. Or alternative issues, such as the deep and complex way in which we ‘think’, may be explored. MacLagan, an art therapist insightfully raises this issue:

The role of art in confirming the split between inner and outer, reality and fantasy, is crucial, for art does not simply record or express what is already there: it actively creates and serves as a conductor for experience. Here the visual arts have a particular responsibility, for it is easy to believe that images and the pictures derived from them are in some way more fundamental than thoughts, or at least than thoughts articulated in words. There is a central issue here, about what kind of ‘thinking’ or shaping of experience might precede or underlie the thinking of which we are conscious (and here I am including in this latter thinking the deliberate visualisation or fantasy) (MacLagan, 1989, p. 38).

Here is raised again the processes of ‘thinking’, of the language of the unconscious, doubtless an area in which a great deal of potential for research exists. In the meantime, hopefully this project has made a contribution to understanding the transformation and growth experiences of contemporary Australian mid-life males in relation to the embodiment of their psychic images. Waiting to be discovered within and around us are many signs of mid-life.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Allis, S. (1990, November 8). What do men really want? *Time Magazine Special Issue: Women: The road ahead*, 80-82.
- Arnheim, R. (1986). *New essays on the psychology of art* (1st ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bell, R. E. (1991). *Women of classical mythology: A biographical dictionary*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO.
- Bettelheim, B. (1983). *Freud and man's soul*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Biddulph, S. (1994). *Manhood: A book about setting men free*. Melbourne: Finch Publishing.
- Bly, R. A. (1993). *Iron John: A story about men* (1st mass market paperback ed.). Brisbane: Element Books.
- Bly, R. A. (1996). *The sibling society*. Melbourne: William Heinemann.
- Cernuschi, C. (1992). *Jackson Pollock, "psychoanalytic" drawings*. Durham: Duke University Press in association with the Duke University Museum of Art.
- Conigliaro, V. (1977). *Dreams as a tool in psychotherapy: Travelling the royal road to the unconscious*. Madison, Conn: International Universities Press.
- Crowther, P. (1993). *Art and embodiment: From aesthetics to self-consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-28). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Department of Human Services, S.A. (2000). *The health and well-being of men in South Australia*. Department of Human Services, South Australia.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Minton Balch & Co.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (1992). Telling and performing personal stories: The constraints of choice in abortion. In C. Ellis & M. G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. vii, 259). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 733-768).
- Encarta World English Dictionary*. (1999). 2005
- Farouque, F. (2005, Saturday, February 26). The solitary confinement of the Aussie bloke. *The Age*, p. 4.
- Flanagan, O. (2000). *Dreaming souls: Sleep, dreams, and the evolution of the conscious mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Freud, S. (1964). *Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood* (A. Tyson, Trans. Standard ed.). New York W.W. Norton, 1964.
- Freud, S., & Strachey, J. (1971). *The interpretation of dreams* (3rd rev. English ed.). London: G.A. & U.
- Ganim, B., & Fox, S. (1999). *Visual journaling: Going deeper than words*. Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (2nd ed.). London: Fontana.
- Gardner, H., & Ferris, J. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gilroy, A., & Dalley, T. (1989). *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy*. London; New York: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Grof, S. (1985). *Beyond the brain*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1975). *Aesthetics: Lectures on fine art* (T. M. Knox, Trans. Vol. i). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hershkowitz, A. (1989). Symbiosis as a driving force in the creative process. In A. Gilroy & T. Dalley (Eds.), *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy* (pp. 54-64). London: Routledge.
- John of the Cross, St. (1990). *Dark night of the soul* (F. A. Peers, Trans.). New York: Doubleday.
- Johnson, R. A. (1986). *Inner work: Using dreams and active imagination for personal growth*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Jung, C. G. (1964). Approaching the unconscious. In C. G. Jung (Ed.), *Man and his symbols* (pp. 18-103). London: Aldus Books.
- Jung, C. G. (1966). *Two essays on analytical psychology* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans. 2nd ed. Vol. 7). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- Jung, C. G. (1969). *The structure and dynamics of the psyche*. (R. F. C. Hull, Trans. 2nd ed. Vol. 8). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1972). *Mandala symbolism* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1975). C. G. Jung. Unpublished letter of 1926 (Vol. 6). Los Angeles: Psychological perspectives. C. G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles.
- Kipnis, A. (1991). *Knights without armor*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Klages, D. M. (2001, 27-09-2001). *Psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud*, from <http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/freud.html>
- Kris, E. (1964). *Psychoanalytic explorations in art*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lambevski, S., Kippax, S., Crawford, J., Abelson, J., Bartos, M., & Mischewski, A. (2001). *Living as men: "It's like being in a washing machine": Masculinities in contemporary urban Australia*. Sydney: National Centre in HIV Social Research.
- Leader, D. (2000). *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What art stops us from seeing*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2000). The seventh moment: Out of the past. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1047-1065). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- London, S. (2005). *Intelligence reframed: Book review*. Retrieved 16-03-05, 2005, from <http://www.scottlondon.com/reviews/gardner2.html>
- Machotka, P., & Felton, L. (2003). *Painting and our inner world: The psychology of image making*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- MacLagan, D. (1989). Fantasy and the figurative. In A. Gilroy & T. Dalley (Eds.), *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy*. London: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Mahler, M. S., Pine, F., & Bergman, A. (1989). *The psychological birth of the human infant: Symbiosis and individuation*. London: Maresfield Library.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (1998). *The art therapy sourcebook*. Los Angeles: Lowell House.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Milner, M. (1971). *On not being able to paint* (2nd ed.). London: Heinemann Educational.
- Moon, C. H. (2002). *Studio art therapy: Cultivating the artist in the art therapies*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Morton, L. P. (2002). Targeting mid-life men. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 47(4), 43.
- Neuman, W. L. (1991). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- O'Connor, P. A. (1993). *The inner man: Men, myths and dreams*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Publishers.
- Rimbaud, A., & Bernard, O. (1997). *Rimbaud: Collected poems*. London: Penguin Books.
- Rimbaud, A., & Osmond, N. (1976). *Illuminations: Coloured plates*. London: Athlone Press.
- Robbins, A. (1994). *A multi-modal approach to creative art therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Sands, K. M. (2003). *The gift of fire: A creative journey at mid-life*. Unpublished EdD, University of Toronto (Canada), Toronto.
- Schaverien, J. (1989). The picture within the frame. In A. Gilroy & T. Dalley (Eds.), *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy* (pp. 147-155). London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Scotton, B. W. (1996). The phenomenology and treatment of Kundalini. In B. W. Scotton, A. B. Chinen & J. R. Battista (Eds.), *Textbook of transpersonal psychiatry and psychology* (pp. 261-270). New York: Basic books.
- Slattery, P. (2001). The educational researcher as artist working within. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(3), 380-398.
- Small, C. J. (1996). *The healing of American Indian/Alaska Native men at midlife*. Unpublished PhD, Gonzaga University.
- Spitz, E. H. (1985). *Art and psyche: A study in psychoanalysis and aesthetics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Storr, A. (1989). Foreword. In A. Gilroy & T. Dalley (Eds.), *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy* (pp. xv, 237). London ; New York: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Sweetman, S. (2000). *A soul approach to art therapy self-inquiry*. Unpublished Master of Arts (Art Therapy), Concordia University (Canada), Montreal.
- Taylor, B. (1989). Early modern painting in Europe: the psychopathological dimension. In A. Gilroy & T. Dalley (Eds.), *Pictures at an exhibition: Selected essays on art and art therapy* (pp. 21-34). London: Routledge.

- Tedlock, B. (2000). Ethnography and ethnographic representation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Unknown, & Johnston, W. (1973). *The cloud of unknowing*. New York: Doubleday.
- von Franz, M. L. (1964). The process of individuation. In C. G. Jung (Ed.), *Man and his symbols* (pp. 158-229). London: Aldus Books.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1991). *Playing and reality*. London: Brunner-Routledge.
- WordNet 2.0. (2003). 2005, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/search>
- Yin, R. K. (2002). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage